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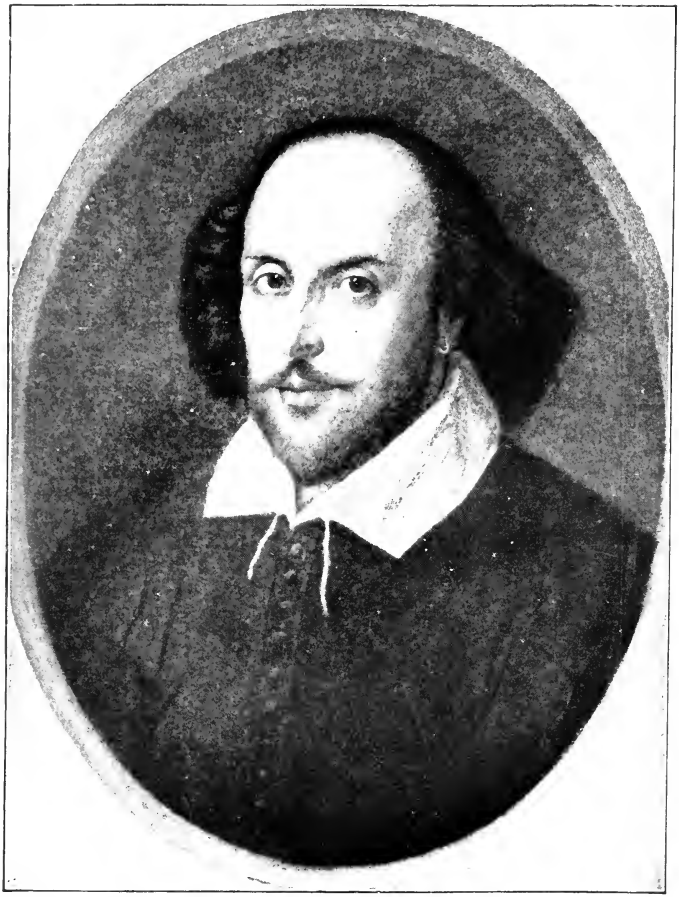

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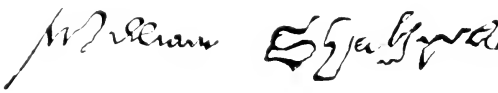

SHAKESPEARE

THE MAN AND HIS WORKS

Being all the Subject Matter about Shakespeare contained in

MOULTON'S

LIBRARY OF LITERARY CRITICISM

SIBLEY & COMPANY

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

THE subject matter of this little volume comprises all the material upon Shakespeare contained in *Moulton's Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors* (8 vols.).

We have been so strongly impressed with its great value to students of Shakespeare that we have secured the right to issue, in handy form, this portion of the above named work.

Right here is gathered and furnished in accessible form the most complete and satisfactory collection of literary appreciations of Shakespeare and his works extant. Three hundred seven writers are represented, including the most eminent in all periods since the time of the Great Bard. All shades of opinion have a place, and through the whole is given a most interesting and instructive view of the world's opinion of Shakespeare.

We have printed the matter exactly as it was prepared by Mr. Moulton. Substantially all the articles have been collated with the original texts.

The reader will quickly note, that the order of arrangement throughout is chronological; that each article is *dated* and *located;* that the opinions are arranged in four divisions — (Personal, Upon Each Work, Authorship Controversy, General) ; that the whole is made readily accessible for reference by an excellent index.

We believe this volume will prove of great interest and service to readers of Shakespeare.

SIBLEY & COMPANY.

July, 1904.

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

1. SYNOPSIS OF SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE 1
2. SHAKESPEARE THE MAN 1
3. HIS WORKS . . . . . .

A Lover's Complaint 29
All's Well that Ends Well 146
A Midsummer Night's Dream 59
Antony and Cleopatra 219
As You Like It 138
Comedy of Errors 55
Coriolanus 225
Cymbeline 250
Hamlet 149
Henry IV. Part I. 117
Henry IV. Part II. 123
Henry V. 132
Henry VI. Part I. 94
Henry VI. Part II. 98
Henry VI. Part III. 99
Henry VIII. 257
Julius Cæsar 174
King John 100
King Lear 201
Love's Labor's Lost 49
Macbeth 188

PAGE.

HIS WORKS (*Continued*)

Measure for Measure 168
Merchant of Venice 105
Merry Wives of Windsor 125
Much Ado About Nothing 135
Othello 178
Pericles 234
Richard II. 82
Richard III. 85
Romeo and Juliet 70
Sonnets 29
Taming of the Shrew 112
The Passionate Pilgrim 37
The Phœnix and the Turtle 39
The Rape of Lucrece 25
The Tempest 240
Timon of Athens 229
Titus Andronicus 41
Troilus and Cressida 211
Twelfth Night 143
Two Gentlemen of Verona 67
Two Noble Kinsmen 237
Venus and Adonis 20
Winter's Tale 253

4. REJECTED PLAYS 263
5. THE AUTHORSHIP CONTROVERSY 268
6. IN GENERAL; THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORKS . . 278
7. INDEX 363

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564–1616

William Shakespeare, 1564–1616. Born, at Stratford-on-Avon, 22 or 23 April 1564. Educated at Stratford Grammar School, 1571–77 (?). Perhaps apprenticed to his father (a butcher), 1577. Married Ann Hathaway, 1582. To London, 1586; acted, and wrote for stage. Plays probably written between 1591 and 1611. Bought New Place, Stratford, May 1597. Bought a house in Blackfriars, 1613. Died, at Stratford-on-Avon, 23 April 1616. Buried in Stratford Church. *Works:* The following are known to have been printed in Shakespeare's lifetime: "Venus and Adonis," 1593; "Lucrece," 1594; "Richard III.," 1597; "Richard II.," 1597; "Romeo and Juliet," 1597; "Henry IV., Pt. I.," 1598; "Love's Labour's Lost," 1598; "Henry V.," 1600; "Midsummer Night's Dream," 1600; "Merchant of Venice," 1600; "Henry IV., Pt. II.," 1600; "Much Ado about Nothing," 1600; "Titus Andronicus," 1600; "Merry Wives of Windsor," 1602; "Hamlet," 1603; "King Lear," 1608; "Sonnets," 1609; "Troilus and Cressida," 1609. His "Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies," ed. by J. Heminge and H. Condell, were first published in 1623; his "Works," ed. by N. Rowe (7 vols.), 1709–10. — SHARP, R. FARQUHARSON, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors, p.* 253.

PERSONAL.

GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,
TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOASED HEARE:
BLESTE BE $^{E}_{Y}$ MAN $^{T}_{Y}$ SPARES THES STONES,
AND CVRST BE HE $^{T}_{Y}$ MOVES MY BONES.

— *Inscription on the Tablet over Shakespeare's Grave, April* 25, 1616.

Base minded men al three of you, if by my miserie ye be not warned: for unto none of you (like me) sought those burres to cleave: those Puppits (I meane) that speake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I, to whom they al have beene beholding: is it not like that you, to whome they all have beene beholding, shall (were ye in that case that I am now) be both at once of them forsaken? Yes, trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide*, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie. O that I might intreate your rare wits to be imployed in more profitable courses: & let these Apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions. I know the best husband of you all will never prove an usurer and the kindest of them all wil never proove a kinde nurse: yet, whilst you may, seeke you better Maisters; for it is pittie men of such rare wits, should be subiect to the pleasures of such rude groomes. — GREENE, ROBERT, 1592, *A Groats-worth of Wit.*

About three moneths since died M. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry Booke sellers hands, among other his Groats-worth of wit, in which, a letter written to diuers playmakers, is offensiuely by one or two of them taken, and because on the dead they cannot be auenged, they wilfully forge in their conceites a liuing author: and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy, but it must light on me. . . . With neither[1] of them that

[1] Marlowe and Shakespeare.

take offence was I acquainted, and with one[1] of them I care not if I neuer be: the other,[2] whom at that time I did not so much spare, as since I wish I had, for that as I haue moderated the heate of liuing writers, and might haue vsed my owne discretion (especially in such a case) the author being dead, that I did not, I am as sory, as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because myselfe haue seene his demeanor no lesse ciuill than he exclent in the qualitie he professes: besides, diuers of worship haue reported his vprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writting, that aprooues his art. — CHETTLE, HENRY, 1592, *Kind-Hart's Dreame, ed. Rimbault, Preface, p.* iv.

?Players, I love yee, and your *Qualitie,*
As ye are Men, *that* pass time not abus'd:
And some I love for *painting, poesie,*
And say fell *Fortune* cannot be excus'd,
That hath for better *uses* you refus'd:
Wit, Courage, good shape, good partes, and all *good,*
As long as al these *goods* are no *worse* us'd,
And though the *stage* doth staine pure gentle *bloud,*
Yet generous yee are in *minde* and *moode.*

— DAVIES, JOHN, OF HEREFORD, 1603, *Microcosmos, ed. Grosart.*

Renowned Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
To learned Chaucer; and rare Beaumont, lie
A little nearer Spenser; to make room
For Shakespeare in your three-fold four-fold tomb:
To lodge all four in one bed make a shift
Until Doomsday; for hardly will a fift,

[1] Marlowe. [2] Shakespeare.

Betwixt this day and that, by fate be slain,
For whom your curtains may be drawn again.
But if precedency in death doth bar
A fourth place in your sacred sepulchre,
Under this carvèd marble of thine own,
Sleep, rare tragedian, Shakespeare, sleep alone:
Thy unmolested peace, unsharèd cave,
Possess as lord, not tenant, of thy grave;
That unto us and others it may be
Honour hereafter to be laid by thee.

— BASSE, WILLIAM, 1616?, *Epitaph on Shakspeare.*

IVDICIO PYLIVM, GENIO SOCRATEM, ARTE MARONEM,
TERRA TEGIT, POPVLVS MÆRET, OLYMPVS HABET.
STAY PASSENGER, WHY GOEST THOV BY SO FAST?
READ IF THOV CANST, WHOM ENVIOVS DEATH HATH PLAST,
WITH IN THIS MONVMENT SHAKSPEARE WITH WHOME
QVICK NATVRE DIDE: WHOSE NAME DOTH DECK $\overset{S}{Y}$ TOMBE
FAR MORE THEN COST: SIEH ALL, Y HE HATH WRITT,
LEAVES LIVING ART, BVT PAGE, TO SERVE HIS WITT.

OBIIT ANO $\overset{I}{DO}$ 1616
ÆTATIS, 53. DIE 23 AP.

— *Inscriptions upon the Tablet under Shakespere's Bust, in the Chancel-north-wall of Stratford Church*, 1617–1622?

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Graver had a strife
With Nature, to out-doo the life:
O, could he but have drawne his Wit
As well in Brasse, as he hath hit

His Face; the Print would then surpasse
All, that was ever writ in Brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.
— J(ONSON), B(EN), 1623, *Facing Droeshout's portrait of Shakespeare prefixed to the First Folio Edition of his Works.*

Mellifluous Shakespeare, whose enchanting quill
Commanded mirth or passion was but *Will.*
— HEYWOOD, THOMAS, 1635, *The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels.*

Shakspear had but two daughters, one whereof Mr. Hall, the physitian, married, and by her had on daughter married, to wit, the Lady Bernard of Abbingdon. I have heard that Mr. Shakspeare was a natural wit, without any art at all; hee frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Stratford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year, and for itt had an allowance so large, that hee spent att the rate of 1,000*l.* a-year, as I have heard. Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, had a merie meeting, and itt seems drank too hard, for Shakespear died of a feavour there contracted. Remember to peruse Shakespeare's plays, and bee much versed in them, that I may not bee ignorant in that matter. Whether Dr. Heylin does well, in reckoning up the dramatick poets which have been famous in England, to omit Shakespeare. — WARD, REV. JOHN, 1648–78, *Diary, ed. Severn, p.* 183.

William Shakespeare was born at Stratford on Avon in this County; [1] in whom three eminent Poets may seem

[1] Warwick.

in some sort to be compounded. 1. Martial, in the warlike sound of his Surname (whence some may conjecture him of a Military extraction) *Hastivibrans*, or Shakespeare. 2. Ovid, the most naturall and witty of all Poets; and hence it was that Queen Elizabeth, coming into a Grammar-School, made this extemporary verse,

"*Persius* a Crab-staffe, Bawdy *Martial*, *Ovid* a fine Wag."

3. Plautus, who was an exact Comedian, yet never any Scholar, as our Shake-speare (if alive) would confess himself. Adde to all these, that though his Genius generally was jocular, and inclining him to festivity, yet he could (when so disposed) be solemn and serious, as appears by his Tragedies; so that Heraclitus himself (I mean if secret and unseen) might afford to smile at his Comedies, they were so merry; and Democritus scarce forbear to sigh at his Tragedies, they were so mournfull. He was an eminent instance of the truth of that Rule, "Poeta non fit, sed nascitur;" one is not made, but *born* a Poet. Indeed his Learning was very little, so that, as Cornish diamonds are not polished by any Lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the Earth, so Nature itself was all the Art which was used upon him. Many were the Wet-combates betwixt him and Ben Jonson; which two I behold like a Spanish great Gallion and an English Man of War: Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in Learning; solid, but slow, in his performances. Shake-speare, with the English Man of War, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his Wit and Invention. — FULLER, THOMAS, 1662, *The Worthies of England, ed. Nichols, vol.* II, *p.* 414.

Mr. William Shakespear was borne at Stratford upon Avon in the county of Warwick. His father was a butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours, that when he was a boy he exercised his father's trade, but when he kill'd a calfe he would doe it in a high style, and make a speech. There was at that time another butcher's son in this towne that was held not at all inferior to him for a naturall witt, his acquaintance and coetanean, but dyed young. This William being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, I guesse, about 18; and was an actor at one of the playhouses, and did act exceedingly well (now B. Johnson was never a good actor, but an excellent instructor). He began early to make essayes at dramatique poetry, which at that time was very lowe; and his playes tooke well. He was a handsome, well-shap't man: very good company, and of a very readie and pleasant smooth witt. — AUBREY, JOHN, 1669–96, *Brief Lives, ed. Clark, vol.* II, *p.* 225.

He had, by a misfortune common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company, and, amongst them, some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing, engaged him more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and, in order to revenge that ill usage, he made a ballad upon him. And though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree, that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire, for some time, and shelter himself in London. — ROWE, NICHOLAS, 1709, *Some Account of the Life of William Shakespeare.*

Thou, soft-flowing Avon, by thy silver stream,
Of things more than Mortal sweet Shakespeare would dream,
The fairies by moonlight dance round his green bed,
For hallow'd the turf is which pillow'd his head.

. . . . . .

Flow on, silver Avon, in song ever flow,
Be the swans on thy waters whiter than snow,
Ever full be thy stream, like his name may it spread,
And the turf ever-hallow'd which pillow'd his head.

— GARRICK, DAVID, 1769, *Ode to Shakespeare.*

The tomb of Shakspeare is in the chancel. The place is solemn and sepulchral. Tall elms wave before the pointed windows, and the Avon, which runs at a short distance from the walls, keeps up a low perpetual murmur. A flat stone marks the spot where the bard is buried. There are four lines inscribed on it, said to have been written by himself, and which have in them something extremely awful. If they are indeed his own, they show that solicitude about the quiet of the grave, which seems natural to fine sensibilities and thoughtful minds. . . . As I crossed the bridge over the Avon on my return, I paused to contemplate the distant church in which the poet lies buried, and could not but exult in the malediction, which has kept his ashes undisturbed in its quiet and hallowed vaults. What honor could his name have derived from being mingled in dusty companionship with the epitaphs and escutcheons and venal eulogiums of a titled multitude? What would a crowded corner in Westminster Abbey have been, compared with this reverend pile, which seems to stand in beautiful loneliness as his sole mausoleum! — IRVING, WASHINGTON, 1819–48, *Stratford-On-Avon, Sketch Book.*

It was not without some pleasurable imaginations that I saw Stratford-upon-Avon, the very hills and woods which the boy Shakespeare had looked upon, the very church where his dust reposes, nay, the very house where he was born; the threshold over which his staggering footsteps carried him in infancy; the very stones where the urchin played marbles and flogged tops. . . . It is a small grim-looking house of bricks, bound, as was of old the fashion, with beams of oak intersecting the bricks which are built into it and fill up its interstices as the glass does in a window. The old tile roof is cast by age, and twisted into all varieties of curvature. Half the house has been modernised and made a butcher's shop. The street where it stands is a simple-looking, short, everyday village street, with houses mostly new, and consisting, like the Shakespeare house, of two low stories, or rather a story and a half. Stratford itself is a humble, pleasant-looking place, the residence as formerly of woolcombers and other quiet artisans, except where they have brought an ugly black canal into it, and polluted this classical borough by the presence of lighters or trackboats with famished horses, sooty drivers, and heaps of coke and coal. It seems considerably larger and less showy than Annan. Shakespeare, Breakspeare, and for aught I know sundry other spears, are still common names in Warwickshire. I was struck on my arrival at Birmingham by a sign not far from Badams's, indicating the abode of William Shakespeare, boot and shoe maker, which boots and shoes the modern Shakespeare also professed his ability to mend "cheap and neatly." Homer, I afterwards discovered, had settled in Birmingham as a button maker. — CARLYLE, THOMAS, 1824, *Letter to John Carlyle, Life, ed. Froude, vol.* I, *p.* 191.

Of William Shakspeare, whom, through the mouths of those whom he has inspired to body forth the modifications of his immense mind, we seem to know better than any human writer, it may be truly said that we scarcely know any thing. We see him, so far as we do see him, not in himself, but in a reflex image from the objectivity in which he was manifested: he is Falstaff and Mercutio and Malvolio and Jaques and Portia and Imogen and Lear and Othello; but to us he is scarcely a determined person, a substantial reality of past time, the man Shakspeare. The two greatest names in poetry are to us little more than names. If we are not yet come to question his unity, as we do that of "the blind old man of Scio's rocky isle," an improvement in critical acuteness doubtless reserved for a distant posterity, we as little feel the power of identifying the young man who came up from Stratford, was afterwards an indifferent player in a London theatre, and retired to his native place in middle life, with the author of Macbeth and Lear, as we can give a distinct historic personality to Homer. All that insatiable curiosity and unwearied diligence have hitherto detected about Shakspeare serves rather to disappoint and perplex us than to furnish the slightest illustration of his character. It is not the register of his baptism, or the draft of his will, or the orthography of his name, that we seek. No letter of his writing, no record of his conversation, no character of him drawn with any fulness by a contemporary, has been produced. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol.* II, *pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 34.

I can vouch, for the following form, all taken from writings of nearly the poet's own age. . . . Schaksper,

Schakesper, Schakespeyr, Shagspere, Shaxper, Shaxpere, Shaxpeare, Shaxsper, Shaxspere, Shaxespere, Shakspere, Shakspear, Shakspeere, Shackspeare, Shackespeare, Shackespere, Shakspeyr, Shakesper, Shakespere, Shakeseper, Shakyspere, Shakespire, Shakespeire, Shakespear, Shakaspeare. They are all manifestly of the same type; and to these varieties others might be added. In two instances I have met with the name written *Saxpere*. . . .

Shakespeare or Shakespear kept its ground as the received and proper orthography of the poet's name till the time of the two very eminent commentators Steevens and Malone. . . . A contemporary critic of inferior note in 1785 introduced another variation. In his hands the name became *Shakspere*, with the object, no doubt, of bringing back the orthography to the form in which the name is said to be found traced by the poet's own hand in his will and in other writings. — HUNTER, JOSEPH, 1845, *New Illustrations of the Life, Studies, and Writings of Shakespeare, vol.* I, *pp.* 4, 5.

As there is hardly a page in his writings which does not shed more light upon the biography of his mind, and bring us nearer to the individuality of the man, the antiquaries in despair have been compelled to abandon him to the psychologists; and the moment the transition from external to internal facts is made, the most obscure of men passes into the most notorious. For this personality and soul we call Shakespeare, the recorded incidents of whose outward career were so few and trifling, lived a more various life — a life more crowded with ideas, passions, volitions, and *events* — than any potentate the world has ever seen. Compared with his experience, the experience of Alexander or Hannibal, of Cæsar or Napo-

leon, was narrow and one-sided. He had projected himself into almost all the varieties of human character, and, in imagination, had intensely realized and *lived* the life of each. From the throne of the monarch to the bench of the village alehouse, there were few positions in which he had not placed himself, and which he had not for a time identified with his own. — WHIPPLE, EDWIN P., 1859–68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p.* 33.

In April, 1664, it was a hundred years since Shakespeare was born. England was occupied in cheering loudly Charles II., who had sold Dunkirk to France for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling, and in looking at something that was a skeleton and had been Cromwell, whitening under the north-east wind and rain on the gallows at Tyburn. In April, 1764, it was two hundred years since Shakespeare was born: England was contemplating the dawn of George III., a king destined to imbecility, who, at that epoch, in secret councils, and in somewhat unconstitutional asides with the Tory chiefs and the German Landgraves, was sketching out that policy of resistance to progress which was to strive, first against liberty in America, then against democracy in France, and which, only under the ministry of the first Pitt, had, in 1778, raised the debt of England to the sum of eighty millions sterling. In April, 1864, three hundred years since Shakespeare's birth, England raises a statue to Shakespeare. It is late, but it is well. — HUGO, VICTOR, 1864, *William Shakespeare, tr. Baillot, p.* 324.

The moral humility of Shakspere is equal to his intellectual grandeur. Mental wealth without pride — such is

the example that he presents, both in theory and practice, to the most favoured son of genius. — HERAUD, JOHN A., 1865, *Shakspere, His Inner Life as Intimated in His Works, p.* 66.

To Stratford-on-the-Avon — And we passed
Thro' aisles and avenues of the princeliest trees
That ever eyes beheld. None such with us
Here in the bleaker North. And as we went
Through Lucy's park, the red day dropt i' the west;
A crimson glow, like blood in lovers' cheeks,
Spread up the soft green sky and passed away;
The mazy twilight came down on the lawns,
And all those huge trees seemed to fall asleep;
The deer went past like shadows. All the park
Lay round us like a dream; and one fine thought
Hung over us, and hallowed all. Yea, he,
The pride of England, glistened like a star,
And beckoned us to Stratford.

LEIGHTON, ROBERT, 1869? *Stratford-on-Avon.*

Of Shakspeare all came from within — I mean from his soul and his genius; external circumstances contributed but slightly to his development. He was intimately bound up with his age; that is, he knew by experience the manners of country, court, and town; he had visited the heights, depths, the middle regions of the condition of mankind; nothing more. For the rest his life was commonplace; the irregularities, troubles, passions, successes through which he passed, were, on the whole, such as we meet with everywhere else. — TAINE, H. A., 1871, *History of English Literature, tr. Van Laun, vol.* I, *bk.* ii, *ch.* iv, *p.* 297.

The manner of his death is uncertain. His will, still preserved in the Prerogative Office, is dated March 25, 1616. The poet's handwriting, never very good, if we may judge from the few signatures that have been preserved, and fifty years more antiquated than that of Sir Thomas Lucy, is feeble, shaky, and imperfect; very little like what might have been expected from one whose practice in writing must have been considerable, and who had in his time filled many reams of manuscript. His death did not occur until the 23rd of April following. It would seem, therefore, that his death was far from sudden; and this alone would suffice to invalidate the tradition, circulated forty-five years after, that the poet died of a fever contracted at a merry meeting with Drayton and Ben Jonson. His bust in Stratford Church, his portrait by Droeshout prefixed to the first folio edition of his works, and the whole tenour of his life, contradict altogether the supposition that the poet was intemperate. If the opinion of competent judges may be taken, the bust was executed from a cast taken after death. It was certainly coloured after life, and until it was painted over by Malone — a greater crime to Shakspeare's memory than Mr. Gaskill's destruction of the famous mulberry tree — it represented the poet exactly as he appeared to his contemporaries. The eyes were a bright hazel, the hair and beard auburn; the doublet was scarlet, covered with a loose black sleeveless gown. As in Droeshout's portrait, the forehead is remarkably high and broad; in fact, the immense volume of the forehead is its most striking feature. The predominant characteristic of the whole is that of a composed, self-possessed, resolute, and vigorous Englishman, of a higher intellectual stamp than usual, but not so far removed from the general national type as

we should have been inclined to expect from his writings. — BREWER, J. S., 1871–81, *English Studies, ed. Wace, p.* 235.

As in his dramatic world he embraces the widest variety of human experience, so in his personal character he may be said to have combined in harmonious union the widest range of qualities, including some apparently the most opposed. He was a vigilant and acute man of business, of great executive ability, with a power of looking into affairs which included a thorough mastery of tedious legal details. But with all his worldly prudence and foresight he was at the same time the most generous and affectionate of men, honored and loved by all who knew him, with the irresistible charm that belongs to simplicity and directness of character combined with thoughtful sympathy and real kindness of heart. And while displaying unrivalled skill, sagacity, and firmness in business transactions and practical affairs, he could promptly throw the whole burden aside, and in the exercise of his noble art pierce with an eagle's wing the very highest heaven of invention. That indeed was his native air, his true home, his permanent sphere, where he still rules with undisputed sway. He occupies a throne apart in the ideal and immortal kingdom of supreme creative art, poetical genius, and dramatic truth. — BAYNES, T. SPENCER, 1886, *Encyclopædia Britannica, Ninth ed., vol.* XXI, *p.* 803.

The folk who lived in Shakespeare's day
And saw that gentle figure pass
By London Bridge, his frequent way —
They little knew what man he was.

The pointed beard, the courteous mien,
The equal port to high and low,
All this they saw or might have seen —
But not the light behind the brow!
The doublet's modest gray or brown,
The slender sword-hilt's plain device,
What sign had these for prince or clown?
Few turned, or none, to scan him twice.
Yet 'twas the king of England's kings!
The rest with all their pomps and trains
Are mouldered, half-remembered things —
'Tis he alone that lives and reigns!

— ALDRICH, THOMAS BAILEY, 1890, *Guilielmus Rex.*

His literary practices and aims were those of contemporary men of letters, and the difference in the quality of his work and theirs was due not to conscious endeavour on his part to act otherwise than they, but to the magic and involuntary working of his genius. He seemed unconscious of his marvellous superiority to his professional comrades. The references in his will to his fellow-actors, and the spirit in which (as they announce in the First Folio) they approached the task of collecting his works after his death, corroborate the description of him as a sympathetic friend of gentle, unassuming mien. The later traditions brought together by Aubrey depict him as "very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit," and there is much in other early posthumous references to suggest a genial, if not a convivial, temperament, linked to a quiet turn for good-humoured satire. But Bohemian ideals and modes of life had no genuine attraction for Shakespeare. His extant work attests his "copious" and continuous industry, and with

his literary power and sociability there clearly went the shrewd capacity of a man of business. Pope had just warrant for the surmise that he

> For gain not glory winged his roving flight,
> And grew immortal in his own despite.

His literary attainments and successes were chiefly valued as serving the prosaic end of providing permanently for himself and his daughters. His highest ambition was to restore among his fellow-townsmen the family repute which his father's misfortunes had imperilled. Ideals so homely are reckoned rare among poets, but Chaucer and Sir Walter Scott, among writers of exalted genius, vie with Shakespeare in the sobriety of their personal aims and in the sanity of their mental attitude toward life's ordinary incidents. — LEE, SIDNEY, 1898, *A Life of William Shakespeare, p.* 278.

That must have been a momentous day in Shakespeare's life on which, after giving up his house in London, he mounted his horse and rode back to Stratford-on-Avon to take up his abode there for good. . . . Life lay behind him now. His hopes had been fulfilled in many ways; he was famous, he had raised himself a degree in the social scale, above all he was rich, but for all that he was not happy. The great town, in which he had spent the better part of a lifetime, had not so succeeded in attaching him to it that he would feel any pain in leaving it. There was neither man nor woman there so dear to him as to make society preferable to solitude, and the crowded life of London to the seclusion of the country and an existence passed in the midst of family and Nature. . . . The journey from London to Strat-

ford took three days. He would put up at the inns at which he was accustomed to stay on his yearly journey to and fro, and where he was always greeted as a welcome guest, and given a bed with snow-white sheets, for which travellers on foot were charged an extra penny, but which he, as rider, enjoyed gratis. The hostess at Oxford, pretty Mistress Davenant, would give him a specially cordial greeting. The two were old and good friends. Little William, born in 1606, and now seven years old, possessed a certain, perhaps accidental, resemblance of feature to the guest. . . . It was the quietude of Stratford which attracted him, its leisure, the emptiness of its dirty streets, its remoteness from the busy world. What he really longed for was Nature, the Nature with which he had lived in such intimate companionship in his early youth, which he had missed so terribly while writing "As You Like It" and its fellow-plays, and from which he had so long been separated. Far more than human beings was it the gardens which he had bought and planted there which drew him back to his native town — the gardens and trees on which he looked from his windows at New Place. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *pp.* 389, 390, 392.

The Birthplace, as it is called, is a cottage of plaster and timber, two stories in height, with dormer windows, and a pleasant garden in the rear — all that remains of a considerable piece of land. It stands upon the street, and the visitor passes at once, through a little porch, into a low room, ceiled with black oak, paved with flags, and with a fireplace so wide that one sees at a glance what the chimney-corner once meant of comfort and cheer.

On those seats, looking into the glowing fire, the imagination of a boy could hardly fail to kindle. A dark and narrow stair leads to the little bare room on the floor above in which Shakespeare was probably born. The place seems fitted, by its very simplicity, to serve as the starting-point for so great a career. There is a small fireplace; the low ceiling is within reach of the hand; on the narrow panes of glass which fill the casement names and initials are traced in irregular profusion. This room has been a place eagerly sought by literary pilgrims since the beginning of the century. The low ceiling and the walls were covered, in the early part of the century, with innumerable autographs. In 1820 the occupant, a woman who attached great importance to the privilege of showing the house to visitors, was compelled to give up that privilege, and, by way of revenge, removed the furniture and whitewashed the walls of the house. A part of the wall of the upper room escaped the sacrilegious hand of the jealous custodian, and names running back to the third decade of the last century are still to be found there. Other and perhaps more famous names have taken the places of those which were erased, and the walls are now a mass of hieroglyphs. Scott, Byron, Rogers, Tennyson, Thackeray, Dickens, have left this record of their interest in the room. No new names are now written on these blackened walls; the names of visitors are kept in a recordbook on the lower floor. — MABIE, HAMILTON WRIGHT, 1900, *William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man, p.* 35.

VENUS AND ADONIS

1585–7–1593

VENVS | AND ADONIS | *Vilia miretur vulgus: mihi flauus Apollo* | *Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.* | London | Imprinted by Richard Field, and are to be sold at | the signe of the white Greyhound in | Paules Churchyard. | 1593. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1593.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HENRY WRIOTHESLY
EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON, AND BARON OF TICHFIELD.

Right Honourable,
I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden: only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a god-father, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish, and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your honour's in all duty,
— SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM, 1593, *Dedication.*

This makes my mourning Muse resolve in teares,
This theames my heavie penne to plaine in prose;
Christ's thorne is sharpe, no head His garland weares;
Stil finest wits are 'stilling Venus' rose,

In Paynim toyes the sweetest vaines are spent;
To Christian workes few have their talents lent.

— SOUTHWELL, ROBERT, 1594? *Saint Peters Complaint, with other Poemes, The Authour to the Reader, ed. Grosart, p.* xii.

Let this duncified worlde esteeme of Spencer and Chaucer, I'le worshipp sweet Mr. Shakspeare, and to honoure him will lay his "Venus and Adonis" under my pillowe, as wee reade of one (I doe not well remember his name, but I am sure he was a kinge) slept with Homer under his bed's heade. Well, I'le bestowe a Frenche crowne in the faire writings of them out, and then I'le instructe thee about the delivery of them. — ANON, *The Return from Pernassus*, 1606, *pt.* i, *act.* iv, *sc.* i, *p.* 63.

But stay my Muse in thine owne confines keepe,
& wage not warre with so deere lov'd a neighbor,
But having sung thy day song, rest and sleepe
preserve thy small fame and his greater favor:
His Song was worthie merrit (*Shakspeare* hee)
sung the faire blossome, thou the withered tree
Laurell is due to him, his art and wit
hath purchast it, *Cypres* thy brow will fit.

— BARKSTEAD, WILLIAM, 1607, *Mirrha, the Mother of Adonis; or Lustes Prodegies, ed. Grosart*, 1876, *p.* 65.

Another (ah, Lord helpe) mee vilifies
With Art of Love, and how to subtilize,
Making lewd *Venus*, with eternall Lines,
To tye *Adonis* to her loves designes:
Fine wit is shew'n therein: but finer twere
If not attired in such bawdy Geare.

But be it as it will: the coyest Dames,
In private read it for their Closset-games:
For, sooth to say, the lines so draw them on,
To the venerian speculation,
That will they, nill they (if of flesh they bee)
They will thinke of it, sith *loose* Thought is free.

— DAVIES, JOHN, OF HEREFORD, 1611? *The Scourge of Folly and other Poems, Works, ed. Grosart, p.* 75.

In "Venus and Adonis," the poet, absolutely carried away by the voluptuous power of his subject, seems entirely to have lost sight of its mythological wealth. Venus, stripped of the prestige of divinity, is nothing but a beautiful courtesan, endeavouring unsuccessfully, by all the prayers, tears, and artifices of love, to stimulate the languid desires of a cold and disdainful youth. Hence arises a monotony which is not redeemed by the simple gracefulness and poetic merit of many passages, and which is augmented by the division of the poem into stanzas of six lines, the last two of which almost invariably present a *jeu d'esprit.* But a metre singularly free from irregularities, a cadence full of harmony, and a versification which had never before been equaled in England. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times, p.* 63.

It is difficult to say to what depths of bad taste the writer of certain passages in "Venus and Adonis" could not fall before his genius or his judgment was full-grown. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 41.

"Venus and Adonis" brims over with poetry — erotic, lyrical, elegiac, and descriptive, — but of dramatic poetry there is none. . . . Shakespeare has been reproached with having debased and degraded the mythological riches of his subject in not presenting Venus as a goddess instead of as a mere beautiful amorous wanton; but the reproach is singularly wanting in perception, for it is precisely this that gives life to this picture. While rejecting the cold mythological verbiage of the Renaissance, he has kept the material and voluptuous spirit of its paganism, and produced this admirable picture of a woman, which has justly been compared to a painting by Titian for richness and depth of colour. — STAPFER, PAUL, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity, tr. Carey, pp.* 133, 135.

The Stratford boy hardly puts in his appearance in London before he presents Lord Southampton, as the "first heir of his invention," with — if not the most mature — at least the most carefully polished production that William Shakespeare's name was ever signed to; and, moreover, as polished, elegant, and sumptuous a piece of rhetoric as English letters has ever produced down to this very day. — MORGAN, APPLETON, 1881, *The Shakespearian Myth, p.* 41.

I think no author of his time could have treated the voluptuous story of "Venus and Adonis" as Shakespeare treated it. All through the hot air of its passion a fresh, pure breeze of something higher trembles, and I am astonished that more has not been made of this point by critics. — DALL, CAROLINE HEALEY, 1886, *What We Really Know about Shakespeare, p.* 98.

There were already many tuneful singers in 1593; but none of them except the master himself could raise such a pageant of voluptuous imagery, or accompany it with such a symphony of harmonious sound, as we find in "Venus and Adonis." No one except Spenser and Sackville evoked the rhyme-clangour of the stanza with such delicate art; no one except these two had portrayed such vivid pictures as the arrest of Adonis by Venus, the captivity of Mars, the portrait of herself by the goddess, the escape of the courser, the description of the boar and of the hare-hunt, the solitary night, the discovery of the foolish youth who has fled from Love's arms to those of Death. But while none, save these, of men living had done, or could have done, such work, there was much here which — whether either could have done it or not — neither had done. — SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature*, *p.* 317.

His careful, well-compacted, and thoroughly constructed poem. — MABIE, HAMILTON WRIGHT, 1900, *William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man*, *p.* 190.

In "Venus and Adonis" glows the whole fresh sensuousness of the Renaissance and of Shakespeare's youth. It is an entirely erotic poem, and contemporaries aver that it lay on the table of every light woman in London. The conduct of the poem presents a series of opportunities and pretexts for voluptuous situations and descriptions. The ineffectual blandishments lavished by Venus on the chaste and frigid youth, who, in his sheer boyishness, is as irresponsive as a bashful woman — her kisses, caresses, and embraces, are depicted in detail. It is as though a Titian or Rubens had painted a model in a

whole series of tender situations, now in one attitude, now in another. Then comes the suggestive scene in which Adonis's horse breaks away in order to meet the challenge of a mare which happens to wander by, together with the goddess's comments thereupon. Then new advances and solicitations, almost inadmissibly daring, according to the taste of our day. An element of feeling is introduced in the portrayal of Venus's anguish when Adonis expresses his intention of hunting the boar. But it is to sheer description that the poet chiefly devotes himself — description of the charging boar, description of the fair young body bathed in blood, and so forth. There is a fire and rapture of colour in it all, as in a picture by some Italian master of a hundred years before. Quite unmistakable is the insinuating, luscious, almost saccharine quality of the writing, which accounts for the fact that, when his immediate contemporaries speak of Shakespeare's diction, honey is the similitude that first suggests itself to them. John Weever, in 1595, calls him "honey-tongued," and in 1598 Francis Meres uses the same term, with the addition of "mellifluous." — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 68.

THE RAPE OF LUCRECE

1594

LVCRECE | LONDON. | Printed by Richard Field, for Iohn Harrison, and are | to be sold at the signe of the white Greyhound | in Paules Churh-yard. | 1594. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1594.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HENRY WRIOTHESLY,
EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON, AND BARON OF TICHFIELD.

The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater; mean time, as it is, it is bound to your lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with all happiness.

Your Lordship's in all duty,
— SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM, 1594, *Dedication.*

Lucrece, of whom proud Rome hath boasted long,
Lately reviv'd to live another age,
And here arriv'd to tell of Tarquin's wrong
Her chaste denial, and the Tyrant's rage,
Acting her passions on our stately stage;
She is remembered, all forgetting me,
Yet I as faire and chaste as e'er was she.

— DRAYTON, MICHAEL, 1594, *Matilda, s.* **vi.**

And Shakespeare, thou, whose hony flowing vaine,
(Pleasing the World) thy Praises doth containe;
Whose Venus, and whose Lucrece (sweet, and chast)
Thy name in Fame's immortall Booke have plac't.
Live ever you, at least in Fame live ever:
Well may the Body die, but Fame die never.

— BARNFIELD, RICHARD, 1605, *Remembrance of some English Poets.*

Who loves chaste life, there Lucrece for a teacher:
Who lis't read lust there's Venus and Adonis.

— FREEMAN, THOMAS, 1614, *Runne and a Great Cast.*

The two poems of Venus and Adonis and of Tarquin and Lucrece appear to us like a couple of ice-houses. They are about as hard, as glittering, and as cold. The author seems all the time to be thinking of his verses, and not of his subject — not of what his characters would feel, but of what he shall say; and as it must happen in all such cases, he always puts into their mouths those things which they would be the last to think of, and which it shows the greatest ingenuity in him to find out. The whole is laboured, uphill work. The poet is perpetually singling out the difficulties of the art to make an exhibition of his strength and skill in wrestling with them. He is making perpetual trials of them as if his mastery over them were doubted. . . . A beautiful thought is sure to be lost in an endless commentary upon it. . . . There is, besides, a strange attempt to substitute the language of painting for that of poetry, to make us *see* their feelings in the faces of the persons. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, *p.* 244.

The action is retarded by all manner of pretty ingenuities. Lucrece in her agony delivers *tirades* on Night, on Time, on Opportunity, as if they were theses for a degree in some academy of wit. Still the effect on a reader in the right mood is not that of frigid cleverness; the faults are faults of youth; the poet's pleasurable excitement can be perceived; nay at times we feel the energetic fervour of his heart. Now and again the poetry surprises, not by

singularity, but as Keats has said that poetry ought to surprise, by a fine excess; sometimes a line is all gold seven times refined; and there is throughout such evidence of a rich, abounding nature in the writer that we are happy with him even while we recognize the idle errors of his nonage. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1880, *English Poets, ed. Ward, vol.* I, *p.* 437.

The strength of "Lucrece" lies in its graphic and gorgeous descriptions, and in its sometimes microscopic psychological analysis. For the rest, its pathos consists of elaborate and far-fetched rhetoric. The lament of the heroine after the crime has been committed is pure declamation, extremely eloquent no doubt, but copious and artificial as an oration of Cicero's, rich in apostrophes and antitheses. The sorrow of "Collatine and his consorted lords" is portrayed in laboured and quibbling speeches. Shakespeare's knowledge and mastery are most clearly seen in the reflections scattered through the narrative. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 71.

If the "Venus" be a pageant of gesture, the "Lucrece" is a drama of emotion. You have the same wealth of imagery, but the images are no longer sunlit and sharply defined. They seem, rather, created by the reflex action of a sleepless brain — as it were fantastic symbols shaped from the lying report of tired eyes staring into darkness; and they are no longer used to decorate the outward play of natural desire and reluctance, but to project the shadows of abnormal passion and acute mental distress.— WYNDHAM, GEORGE, 1898, *ed. The Poems of Shakespeare, Introduction, p.* XCV.

A LOVER'S COMPLAINT

Of "A Lover's Complaint," marked as it is throughout with every possible sign suggestive of a far later date and a far different inspiration, I have only space or need to remark that it contains two of the most exquisitely Shakespearean verses ever vouchsafed to us by Shakespeare, and two of the most execrably euphuistic or dysphuistic lines ever inflicted on us by man. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 61.

The framework of "A Lover's Complaint," its picturesqueness, versification, diction, repression, tenderness, and beauty, give to it a thoroughly Spenserian character, and convey the impression that we have here an early exercise in the Spenserian style; as such the poem links itself ultimately to the exquisite "Complaints" of Spenser's great master, Geoffrey Chaucer, with their ruthful burden: — "*Pitê is dede and buried in gentil herte.*"— GOLLANCZ, ISRAEL, 1896, *ed. Temple Shakespeare, Preface to Lucrece, p.* vii.

If, as is possible, it be by Shakespeare, it must have been written in very early days. — LEE, SIDNEY, 1898, *A Life of William Shakespeare, p.* 91.

SONNETS

1592–1602–1609

SHAKE-SPEARES | Sonnets. | Neuer before Imprinted. | AT LONDON | By *G Eld* for *T. T.* and are | to be solde by *William Aspley.* | 1609. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST SEPARATE EDITION, 1609.

TO . THE . ONLIE . BEGETTER . OF .
THESE . INSVING . SONNETS .
MR. W. H. ALL . HAPPINESSE .
AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .
PROMISED .
BY .
OVR . EVER–LIVING . POET .
WISHETH .
THE . WELL–WISHING .
ADVENTVRER . IN .
SETTING .
FORTH . T. T.

— DEDICATION OF FIRST EDITION, 1609.

Fugitive pieces which the poetic and sprightly grace of some lines would not have rescued from oblivion but for the curiosity which attaches to the slightest traces of a celebrated man. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times*, *p.* 65.

If any should be curious to discover
Whether to you I am a friend or lover,
Let them read Shakspeare's sonnets, taking thence
A whetstone for their dull intelligence
That tears and will not cut, or let them guess
How Diotima, the wise prophetess,
Instructed the instructor, and why he
Rebuked the infant spirit of melody
On Agathon's sweet lips, which as he spoke
Was as the lovely star when morn has broke
The roof of darkness, in the golden dawn,
Half-hidden and yet beautiful.

— SHELLEY, PERCY BYSSHE, 1822? *Studies for Epipsychidion, and Cancelled Passages, Poetical Works, ed. Forman, vol.* II, *p.* 392.

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned
Mindless of its just honours; with this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart.

— WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM, 1827, *Sonnet.*

They contain such a quantity of profound thought as must astonish every reflecting reader; they are adorned by splendid and delicate imagery; they are sublime, pathetic, tender, or sweetly playful; while they delight the ear by their fluency and their varied harmonies of rhythm. — DYCE, ALEXANDER, 1833, *Specimens of English Sonnets, p.* 213.

As a whole, however, these sonnets are no more to our poet's fame, than a snowball on the top of Olympus. — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1838, *ed. Shakspeare's Plays, Moxon ed., Life.*

They rise, indeed, in estimation, as we attentively read and reflect upon them; for I do not think that at first they give us much pleasure. No one ever entered more fully than Shakspeare into the character of this species of poetry, which admits of no expletive imagery, no merely ornamental line. . . . It is impossible not to wish that Shakspeare had never written them. There is a weakness and folly in all excessive and misplaced affection, which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments that abound in this long series of sonnets. But there are also faults of a merely critical nature. The obscurity is often such as only conjecture can penetrate; the strain of tenderness and adoration would be too monotonous, were it less unpleasing; and so many frigid conceits are scattered around, that we might almost

fancy the poet to have written without genuine emotion, did not such a host of other passages attest the contrary. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol.* III, *pt.* iii, *ch.* v, *par.* 48, 50.

There is nothing more remarkable or fascinating in English poetry. . . . We read them again and again, and find each time some new proof of his almost superhuman insight into human nature; of his unrivalled mastery over all the tones of love. We cannot bring ourselves to wish that "Shakspeare had never written them," or that the world should have wanted perhaps the most powerful and certainly the most singular, utterances of passion which Poetry has yet supplied. — PALGRAVE, FRANCIS TURNER, 1865, *ed. Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare, p.* 243.

We may look upon the Sonnets as a piece of music, or as Shakspere's pathetic sonata, each melody introduced, dropped again, brought in again with variations, but one full strain of undying love and friendship through the whole. . . . In the Sonnets we have the gentle Will, the melancholy mild-eyed man, of the Droeshout portrait. Shakspere's tender, sensitive, refined nature is seen clearly here, but through a glass darkly in the plays. . . . Still I think it is plain that Shakspere had become involved in an intrigue with a married woman, who threw him over for his friend Will. She was dark, had beautiful eyes, and was a fine musician, but false. . . . Sad as it may be to us to be forced to conclude that shame has to be cast on the noble name we reverence, yet let us remember that it is but for a temporary stain on his career, and that through the knowledge of the human heart he gained

by his own trials we get the intensest and most valuable records of his genius. It is only those who have been through the mill themselves, that know how hard God's stones and the devil's grind. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere.*

With Wordsworth, Sir Henry Taylor, and Mr. Swinburne, with François-Victor Hugo, with Kreyssig, Ulrici, Gervinus, and Hermann Isaac, with Boaden, Armitage Brown, and Hallam, with Furnivall, Spalding, Rossetti, and Palgrave, I believe that Shakspere's Sonnets express his own feelings in his own person. To whom they were addressed is unknown. We shall never discover the name of that woman who for a season could sound, as no one else, the instrument in Shakspere's heart from the lowest note to the top of the compass. To the eyes of no diver among the wrecks of time will that curious talisman gleam. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1881, *ed. The Sonnets of William Shakspere.*

For our own part, we find it as difficult to believe that some of the Sonnets are autobiographical as that others are not; and all that has been written to prove that 1–126 are all addressed to the same person fails to convince us. It is clear enough that certain sets (like 1–17, for instance) form a regular series, but that all the poems are arranged in the order in which Shakespeare meant to have them is not so clear. There is no evidence that the edition of 1609 was supervised or even authorized by him. The enigmatical dedication is not his, but the publisher's; and the arrangement of the poems is probably that of the person who procured them for publication, whoever he may have been. The order seems to us more like

that of a *collector* — one who knew something of their history, and was interested in getting them together for publication — than that of the *author*. Possibly this collector had his own little theory as to the interconnection of some of them, like certain of the modern editors, no one of whom seems on the whole to have been any more successful in classifying them. We fear that both their order and the means by which the publisher got possession of them must continue to be among the insoluble problems of literature. — ROLFE, WILLIAM J., 1883–90, *ed. Shakespeare's Sonnets, Introduction, p.* 11.

These magnificent poems — magnificent notwithstanding many minor flaws — must always hold their high place, not only as the personal record of the greatest of our poets, but for the sake of their own consummate beauty and intellectual force. — SHARP, WILLIAM, 1886, *ed. Sonnets of This Century, p.* xlvii.

We have all tried to wring the heart out of that mystery. We have all felt the accent of acute passion alternating with the accent of what looks like artificial compliment — the inequality of style, the inequality of emotion, the inequality of artistic handling — in those unparalleled outpourings of a mighty poet's soul. We do not doubt their genuineness. We trace the outlines of a story in them, which it is not difficult to decipher, although the import may be painful. So far we are agreed. But when it comes to deciding whether Shakespeare intended a merely dramatic series of psychological lyrics, or whether he committed his own experience from day to day to paper in the sonnets, or whether he wrote them for a friend — who Mr. W. H. was, and who the dark lady was — then

at once we differ. As it seems to me, this is the point at which sound criticism diverges from criticism overweighted with erudition or with subjective prepossession. — SYMONDS, JOHN ADDINGTON, 1890, *Essays Speculative and Suggestive, vol.* I, *p.* 117.

In literary value Shakespeare's sonnets are notably unequal. Many reach levels of lyric melody and meditative energy that are hardly to be matched elsewhere in poetry. The best examples are charged with the mellowed sweetness of rhythm and metre, the depth of thought and feeling, the vividness of imagery and the stimulating fervour of expression which are the finest proofs of poetic power. On the other hand, many sink almost into inanity beneath the burden of quibbles and conceits. In both their excellences and their defects Shakespeare's sonnets betray near kinship to his early dramatic work, in which passages of the highest poetic temper at times alternate with unimpressive displays of verbal jugglery. — LEE, SIDNEY, 1898, *A Life of William Shakespeare, p.* 87.

What is important is that Shakespeare has here caught up the sum of love and uttered it as no poet has before or since, and that in so doing he carried poetry — that is to say, the passionate expression in verse of the sensual and intellectual facts of life — to a pitch which it had never previously reached in English, and which it has never outstepped since. The coast-line of humanity must be wholly altered, the sea must change its nature, the moon must draw it in different ways, before that tide-mark is passed. — SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature, p.* 319.

Here, and here alone, we see Shakespeare himself, as distinct from his poetical creations, loving, admiring, longing, yearning, adoring, disappointed, humiliated, tortured. Here alone does he enter the confessional. Here more than anywhere else can we, who at a distance of three centuries do homage to the poet's art, feel ourselves in intimate communion, not only with the poet, but with the man. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 356.

Every person of culture who reads the Sonnets nowadays is pleased to find in most of them fertility of thought, beauty of imagery, and mellifluous versification, but having read them he is at a loss to know precisely what they are all about. Are they, he asks himself, a continuous poem, or so many isolated poems? Are they autobiographical or dramatic; or are they poems at all in the proper sense, and not enigmas, concealing under a poetic garb some deep and occult philosophy? Each of these questions has been answered affirmatively and negatively with equal zeal and ingenuity. In the complete editions of Shakespeare's "Works" the editors have tried their hands at solving the several difficulties, but not with much success; and bulky volumes have been prepared to prove various theories as to their design and significance, which carry no conviction with them beyond the immediate circle of authorship. These differences of opinion are largely due to a certain obscurity in the Sonnets themselves. . . . They allude to situations that have now passed entirely out of memory; they indulge in conceits and plays upon words which rather perplex than help the understanding of them; and often they admit locutions, which, if not wholly obsolete, are yet very different

from our accepted forms. Indeed, in reading them, it sometimes happens that we come upon passages which at first seem clear and intelligible, but which on closer scrutiny, like the face of a dumb man, get indefinite and vague. — GODWIN, PARKE, 1900, *A New Study of the Sonnets of Shakespeare, pp.* 4, 6.

THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM

THE | PASSIONATE | PILGRIME | *By W. Shakespeare.* | AT LONDON | Printed for W. Iaggard, and are | to be sold by W. Leake, at the Grey- | hound in Paules Church-yard. | 1599. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1599.

Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest injury done me in that worke, by taking the two Epistles of *Paris* to *Helen*, and *Helen* to *Paris*, and printing them in a lesse volume, under the name of another, which may put the world in opinion I might steale them from him; and hee to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name: but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage, under whom he hath publisht them, so the Author I know much offended with M. *Jaggard* that (altogether unknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name. — HEYWOOD, THOMAS, 1612, *An Apology for Actors, Epistle.*

In "the Passionate Pilgrim," some critics find difficulty in tracing the hand of the poet; and we accidentally discover by the complaint of Heywood, a congenial dramatist, that there were two of his poems in one edition of this collection; and we know that there were also

other poems by Marlowe and Barnefield and others. Heywood tells us that Shakespeare was greatly offended at this licentious use of his name; but he must have been imperturbably careless on such matters, otherwise he would not have suffered three editions of this spurious miscellany. — DISRAELI, ISAAC, 1841, *Shakespeare, Amenities of Literature.*

The worst active or positive blemish — and a most fearful and shameful blemish it is — to be found in this generally graceful and careful collection [1] will unluckily be found and cannot be overlooked on the fourth page; sixth on the list of selected poems is a copy of verse attributed to Shakespeare — of all men on earth! — by the infamous pirate, liar, and thief who published a worthless little volume of stolen and mutilated poetry patched up and padded out with dirty and dreary doggrel, under the senseless and preposterous title of "The Passionate Pilgrim." It is here more plausibly ascribed tho' on what authority I know not, to some scribbler — unknown to Shakespeare's contemporaries — who would seem to have signed himself Shakspere, and to have imagined that the gabble of geese or the chatter of apes was English and was verse. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1891, *Social Verse, The Forum, vol.* 12, *p.* 173.

It contains twenty-one numbers, besides that lofty dirge, so unapproachably solemn, "The Phoenix and the Turtle." Of these, five are undoubtedly by Shakespeare. A sixth ("Crabbed age and youth"), if not by Shakespeare, is one of the loveliest lyrics in the language, and I for my part could give it to no other man. Note also

[1] "Lyra Elegantiarum," edited by Frederick Locker-Lampson.

that but for Jaggard's enterprise this jewel had been irrevocably lost to us, since it is known only through "The Passionate Pilgrim." Marlowe's "Live with me and be my love" and Barnefield's "As it fell upon a Day," make numbers seven and eight. And I imagine that even Mr. Swinburne cannot afford to scorn "Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely pluck'd, soon faded" — which again only occurs in "The Passionate Pilgrim." These nine numbers, with "The Phœnix and the Turtle," make up more than half the book. Among the rest we have the pretty and respectable lyrics; "If music and sweet poetry agree;" "Good night, good rest;" "Lord, how mine eyes throw gazes to the east;" "When as thine eye hath chose the dame," and the gay little song, "It was a Lording's daughter." There remain the "Venus and Adonis" sonnets and "My flocks feed not." Mr. Swinburne may call these "dirty and dreary doggrel," an he list, with no more risk than of being held a somewhat overanxious moralist. But to call the whole book worthless is mere abuse of words. It is true, nevertheless, that one of the only two copies existing of the first edition was bought for three halfpence. — QUILLER-COUCH, A. T., 1895, *Adventures in Criticism*, *p.* 39.

THE PHŒNIX AND THE TURTLE

1601

To unassisted readers, it would appear to be a lament on the death of a poet, and of his poetic mistress. But the poem is so quaint, and charming in diction, tone, and allusions, and in its perfect metre and harmony, that I would gladly have the fullest illustration yet attainable.

I consider this piece a good example of the rule, that there is a poetry for bards proper, as well as a poetry for the world of readers. This poem, if published for the first time, and without a known author's name, would find no general reception. Only the poets would save it. — EMERSON, RALPH WALDO, 1875, *Parnassus, Preface, p.* vi.

Priceless and unique. — GROSART, ALEXANDER B., 1878, *ed. Chester's Love's Martyr, Introduction.*

The contribution of the great dramatist is a remarkable poem in which he makes a notice of the obsequies of the phœnix and turtle-dove subservient to the delineation of spiritual union. It is generally thought that, in his own work, Chester meditated a personal allegory, but, if that be the case, there is nothing to indicate that Shakespeare participated in the design, nor even that he had endured the punishment of reading "Love's Martyr." — HALLIWELL-PHILLIPPS, J. O., 1881–86, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare, vol.* I, *p.* 173.

For ourself we agree with Malone, Emerson, Halliwell-Phillipps, and others, that the poem is clearly Shakespeare's. Aside from the internal evidence, the circumstances of its publication seem to us enough to settle the question. . . . The other poems he prints are all, we believe, acknowledged to be from the authors to whom he ascribes them. Why should we hesitate to accept "The Phœnix and the Turtle" as Shakespeare's, when Chester marks it as his, and when it is in no respect unworthy of him? — ROLFE, WILLIAM J., 1883, *Shakespeariana, Literary World, vol.* 14, *p.* 96.

The genuineness of the contribution with Shakespeare's name subscribed is now generally admitted, though no successful attempt has yet been made to explain the allegory, nor is any light thrown upon it by the other poems in the collection; among the contributors, in addition to Shakespeare, were Jonson, Chapman, and Marston. In all probability the occasion and subject of the whole collection, which has so long baffled patient research, will some day be discovered, and Shakespeare's meaning will be clear. It would seem from the title-page that the private family history of Sir John Salisbury ought to yield the necessary clue to the events. — GOLLANCZ, ISRAEL, 1896, *ed. Temple Shakespeare, Preface to Lucrece, p.* viii.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

(?) 1588–1600

The most lamenta- | ble Romaine Tragedie of *Titus* | *Andronicus.* | As it hath sundry times beene playde by the | Right Honourable the | Earle of Pembrooke, the | Earl of Darbie, the Earle of Sussex, and the | Lorde Chamberlaine theyr | Seruants. | AT LONDON, | Printed by I. R. for Edward White | and are to bee solde at his shoppe, at the little | North doore of Paules, at the signe of | the Gun. 1600. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1600.

It is also agreed, that every man heere, exercise his owne Iudgement, and not censure by *Contagion*, or upon *trust*, from anothers voice, or face. . . . Hee that will sweare *Ieronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best playes yet,

shall passe unexcepted at, heere, as a man whose Iudgement shewes it is constant, and hath stood still, these five and twentie, or thirtie yeeres. — JONSON, BEN, 1614, *Bartholomew Fayre*, *The Induction.*

I have been told by some anciently conversant with the stage, that it was not originally his, but brought by a private author to be acted, and he only gave some master-touches to one or two of the principal parts or characters. — RAVENSCROFT, EDWARD, 1678, *Titus Andronicus*, *Preface.*

All the editors and critics agree with Mr. Theobald in supposing this play spurious. I see no reason for differing from them; for the colour of the style is wholly different from that of the other plays, and there is an attempt at regular versification and artificial closes, not always inelegant, yet seldom pleasing. The barbarity of the spectacles, and the general massacre, which are here exhibited, can scarcely be conceived tolerable to any audience; yet we are told by Jonson, that they were not only born, but praised. That Shakspeare wrote any part, though Theobald declares it incontestible, I see no reason for believing. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

If those who reject this play as Shakespear's think it inferior to the rest of his productions, the doubt is easily cleared by recollecting that it was his first effort. There are certainly some things in it equal to his happiest sallies; and, as we know those are superior to the writings of any man who ever lived, the question to be asked is, and

this will perpetually occur, if Shakespear did not write "Titus Andronicus," who did? — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 31.

If it be true that genius, even in its lowest abasement, gives forth some luminous rays to betray its presence; if Shakspeare, in particular, bore that distinctive mark which, in one of his sonnets, makes him say, in reference to his writings,

"That every word doth almost tell my name,"[1]

assuredly he had not to reproach himself with the production of that execrable accumulation of horrors which, under the name of "Titus Andronicus," has been foisted upon the English people as a dramatic work, and in which, Heaven be thanked! there is not a single spark of truth, or scintillation of genius, which can give evidence against him. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times, p.* 66.

"Titus Andronicus" is now by common consent denied to be, in any sense, a production of Shakspeare: very few passages, I should think not one, resemble his manner. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol.* II, *pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 35.

That, nevertheless, this drama is rich in isolated beauties, profound thoughts, and striking peculiarities, Shakspearean imagery, which like lightning flashes over and illumines the whole piece, and that single scenes are even deeply affecting and highly poetical, is generally admitted, and requires no proof. It will be sufficient to call atten-

[1] Sonnet 76.

tion to the scenes of the shooting the arrows, and of the interview between Titus and Tamora, who announces herself to the old man, whom she believes to be mad, as the Goddess of Vengeance. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art, p.* 237.

Critics have vied with one another in loading this play with epithets of contempt; and indeed, as compared with the higher products of dramatic poetry, it has little to recommend it. But in itself, and for its times, it was very far from giving the indication of an unpoetical or undramatic mind. One proof of this is, that it was long a popular favorite on the stage. It is full of defects, but these are precisely such as a youthful aspirant, in an age of authorship, would be most likely to exhibit — such as the subjection to the taste of the day, good or bad, and the absence of that dramatic truth and reality which some experience of human passion, and observation of life and manners, can alone give the power to produce. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844-47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare, vol.* III.

After the first scene of "Andronicus," in which the author sets out with the stately pace of his time, we are very soon carried away, by the power of the language, the variety of the pause, and the especial freedom with which trochees are used at the ends of lines, to forget that the versification is not *altogether* upon the best Shaksperean model. There is the same instrument, but the performer has not yet thoroughly learnt its scope and its power. — KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere, bk.* ii, *ch.* i, *p.* 49.

In 1687 there was a tradition reported by Ravenscroft that this play was only touched by Shakespeare. Theobald, Johnson, Farmer, Steevens, Drake, Singer, Dyce, Hallam, H. Coleridge, W. S. Walker, reject it entirely. Malone, Ingleby, Staunton, think it was touched up by him. Capell, Collier, Knight, Gervinus, Ulrici, and many Germans, think it to be Shakespeare's; R. G. White, that it is a joint work of Greene, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. . . . Is not Shakespeare's; it is built on the Marlowe blank-verse system, which Shakespeare in his early work opposed; and did not belong to Shakespeare's company till 1600. — FLEAY, FREDERICK GARD, 1859, *Shakespeare Manual, p.* 44.

Shakspere is the tragedy of Terror; this is the tragedy of Horror. . . . It reeks blood, it smells of blood; we almost feel that we have handled blood — it is so gross. The mental stain is not whitened by Shakspere's sweet springs of pity; the horror is not hallowed by that appalling sublimity with which he invested his chosen ministers of death. It is tragedy only in the coarsest material relationships. — MASSEY, GERALD, 1866, *Shakspere's Sonnets never before Interpreted, p.* 581, *Appendix D.*

That tragedy belongs to the pre-Shaksperian school of bloody dramas. If any portions of it be from Shakspere's hand, it has at least this interest — it shows that there was a period of Shakspere's authorship when the poet had not yet discovered himself, a period when he yielded to the popular influences of the day and hour; this much interest, and no more. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1875–80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, p.* 48.

To me, as to Hallam and many others, the play declares as plainly as play can speak, "I am not Shakspere's; my repulsive subject, my blood and horrors, are not, and never were, his." I accept the tradition that Ravenscroft reports when he revived and altered the play in 1687, that it was brought to Shakspere to be touched up and prepared for the stage. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere.*

Nearly all the best critics, from Theobald downwards, are agreed that very little of this play was written by Shakespeare. And such is decidedly my own judgment now, though some thirty years ago, in "my salad days," I wrote and printed otherwise. . . . The question, by whom the main body of the play was written, is not so easily answered, and perhaps is hardly worth a detailed investigation. . . . I agree substantially with Mr. White and Mr. Fleay as to Marlowe's share in the workmanship. — HUDSON, HENRY N., 1880-81, *Harvard ed. Shakespeare, vol.* XIII, *pp.* 4, 5.

It is unnecessary to give any analysis of the play, which is simply a tissue of horrors. In no reader, however little educated, could it possibly excite the slightest emotion; all pity and all terror absolutely cease when the horrible is carried to such lengths, and its outrageous atrocity is even capable of provoking a fit of laughter. — STAPFER, PAUL, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity, tr. Carey, p.* 273.

It may at first seem strange that his name should have come to be associated with a work in which we find so

few traces of his hand; but he may have improved the old play in other ways than by rewriting any considerable portion of it — by omissions, re-arrangement of scenes, and the like — and its great popularity in the revised form may have led to its being commonly known as "Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*" (in distinction from the earlier version, whosesoever it may have been), until at length it got to be generally regarded as one of his original productions. The verdict of the editors and critics is so nearly unanimous against the authenticity of the play that the burden of proof clearly rests with the other side. — ROLFE, WILLIAM J., 1883, *ed. Shakespeare's Tragedy of Titus Andronicus, Introduction, p.* 15.

As I re-read this play after coming straight from the study of Marlowe, I find again and again passages that, as it seems to me, no hand but his could have written. It is not easy in a question of this kind to set down in detail reasons for our belief. Marlowe's influence permeated so thoroughly the dramatic literature of his day, that it is hard sometimes to distinguish between master and pupil. When the master is writing at his best there is no difficulty, but when his work is hasty and ill-digested, or has been left incomplete and has received additions from other hands, then our perplexity is great. In our disgust at the brutal horrors that crowd the pages of "Titus Andronicus," we must beware of blinding ourselves to the imaginative power that marks much of the writing. — BULLEN, A. H., 1884, *ed. Works of Christopher Marlowe, Introduction, vol.* I, *p.* lxxvi.

It was no invention of Shakespeare's; it is not reconstructed upon Shakespeare's lines; but, as we see, char-

acters were renamed, some of the matter was recast, crudities were struck out, here and there the writing was touched over, and some fresh lines were inserted. We find lines in which we feel young Shakespeare's touch, and while the whole construction of the play that Shakespeare worked upon is thoroughly unlike the inventions of Shakespeare himself, its crude horrors are, no doubt, felt the more intensely for his removal of absurdities in the first way of telling them, and for touches of his that gave more pomp of words and more force to the style, with now and then some small hint of a grace beyond the reach of the inventor and first writer of the play. — MORLEY, HENRY, 1893, *English Writers, vol.* X, *p.* 45.

Although, on the whole, one may certainly say that this rough-hewn drama, with its piling-up of external effects, has very little in common with the tone or spirit of Shakespeare's mature tragedies, yet we find scattered through it lines in which the most diverse critics have professed to recognise Shakespeare's revising touch, and to catch the ring of his voice. . . . It is quite unnecessary for any opponent of blind or exaggerated Shakespeare-worship to demonstrate to us the impossibility of bringing "Titus Andronicus" into harmony with any other than a barbarous conception of tragic poetry. But although the play is simply omitted without apology from the Danish translation of Shakespeare's works, it must by no means be overlooked by the student, whose chief interest lies in observing the genesis and development of the poet's genius. The lower its point of departure, the more marvellous its soaring flight. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *pp.* 40, 41.

Our loss is great indeed if an impertinent solicitude for Shakespeare's morals, an officious care for his reputation as a creator of character, lead us to pass over "Titus Andronicus." — WYNDHAM, GEORGE, 1898, *The Poems of Shakespeare, Introduction, p.* xvi.

LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST

1588–1598

A | Pleasant | Conceited Comedie | called, | Loues labors lost. | As it was presented before her Highnes | this last Christmas. | Newly corrected and augmented | *By W. Shakespere.* | Imprinted at London by W. W. | for *Cutbert Burby.* | 1598. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1598.

Love's Labour Lost I once did see, a Play
Y-cleped so, so called to my paine.
Which I to heare to my small Ioy did stay,
Giving attendance on my froward Dame:
My misgiving minde presaging to me ill,
Yet was I drawne to see it 'gainst my will,
. . . . . .
Each Actor plaid in cunning wise his part,
But chiefly Those entrapt in Cupids snare;
Yet All was fained, 'twas not from the hart,
They seemde to grieve, but yet they felt no care:
'Twas I that Griefe (indeed) did beare in brest,
The others did but make a show in Iest.
— T(OFTE), R(OBERT), 1598, *Alba.*

I have sent and bene all thys morning huntyng for players Juglers & Such kinde of Creaturs, but fynde

them harde to finde, wherfore Leavinge notes for them to seeke me, burbage ys come, & Sayes ther ys no new playe that the quene hath not seene, but they have Revyved an olde one, Cawled *Loves Labore lost*, which for wytt & mirthe he sayes will please her excedingly. And Thys ys apointed to be playd to Morowe night at my Lord of Sowthamptons, unless yow send a wrytt to Remove the Corpus Cum Causa to your howse in strande. Burbage ys my messenger Ready attendyng your pleasure. — COPE, SIR WALTER, 1604, *Letter "To the right honorable the Lorde Vycount Cranborne at the Courte." Historical MSS.* 1872, *p.* 148.

In this play, which all the editors have concurred to censure, and some have rejected as unworthy of our poet, it must be confessed that there are many passages mean, childish, and vulgar; and some which ought not to have been exhibited, as we are told they were, to a maiden queen. But there are scattered through the whole many sparks of genius; nor is there any play that has more evident marks of the hand of Shakspeare. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

"Love's Labour Lost" is numbered among the pieces of his youth. It is a humorsome display of frolic; a whole cornucopia of the most vivacious jokes is emptied into it. Youth is certainly perceivable in the lavish superfluity of labour in the execution: the unbroken succession of plays on words, and sallies of every description, hardly leave the spectator time to breathe; the sparkles of wit fly about in such profusion that they resemble a blaze of fireworks; while the dialogue, for the most part,

is in the same hurried style in which the passing masks at a carnival attempt to banter each other. — SCHLEGEL, AUGUSTUS WILLIAM, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature, Lecture XII., tr. Black, rev. Morrison.*

If we were to part with any of the author's comedies, it should be this. Yet we should be loth to part with Don Adriano de Armado, that mighty potentate of nonsense; or his page, that handful of wit; with Nathaniel the curate, or Holofernes the schoolmaster, and their dispute after dinner, on "the golden cadences of poesy;" with Costard the clown, or Dull the constable. Biron is too accomplished a character to be lost to the world, and yet he could not appear without his fellow-courtiers and the king: and if we were to leave out the ladies, the gentlemen would have no mistresses. So that we believe we must let the whole play stand as it is, and we shall hardly venture to "set a mark of reprobation on it." Still we have some objections to the style, which we think savours more of the pedantic spirit of Shakespear's time than of his own genius; more of controversial divinity, and the logic of Peter Lombard, than of the inspiration of the Muse. It transports us quite as much to the manners of the court, and the quirks of courts of law, as to the scenes of nature, or the fairy-land of his own imagination. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 206.

If this juvenile drama had been the only one extant of our Shakspere, and we possessed the tradition only of his riper works, or accounts of them in writers who had not even mentioned this play — how many of Shakspere's characteristic features might we not still have discovered

in "Love's Labour's Lost," though as in a portrait taken of him in his boyhood. I can never sufficiently admire the wonderful activity of thought throughout the whole of the first scene of the play, rendered natural, as it is, by the choice of the characters, and the whimsical determination on which the drama is founded. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 283.

Yet with all its diversity of characters, poetic beauties, wit, and sentences, "Love's Labour's Lost" is but little regarded. It is devoid of dramatic interest, and not even the fairest and freshest beauties of Shakspeare's genius can compensate for poverty of plot and deficiency of action. — SKOTTOWE, AUGUSTINE, 1824, *Life of Shakspeare, vol.* I, *p.* 254.

There is indeed little interest in the fable, if we can say that there is any fable at all; but there are beautiful coruscations of fancy, more original conception of character than in the "Comedy of Errors," more lively humor than in the "Gentlemen of Verona," more symptoms of Shakspeare's future powers as a comic writer than in either. Much that is here but imperfectly developed came forth again in his later plays, especially in "As you Like It," and "Much Ado about Nothing." — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol.* II, *pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 38.

Both the characters and the dialogue are such as youthful talent might well invent, without much knowledge of real life, and would indeed be likely to invent, before the

experience and observation of varied society. The comedy presents a picture, not of the true every-day life of the great or the beautiful, but exhibits groups of such brilliant personages as they might be supposed to appear in the artificial conversation, the elaborate and continual effort to surprise or dazzle by wit or elegance, which was the prevailing taste of the age, in its literature, its poetry, and even its pulpit; and in which the nobles and beauties of the day were accustomed to array themselves for exhibition, as in their state attire, for occasions of display. All this, when the leading idea was once caught, was quite within the reach of the young poet to imitate or surpass, with little or no personal knowledge of aristocratic — or what would now be termed fashionable — society. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare, vol.* II.

"Love's Labour's Lost" is not a favourite play with the general reader, but the cause of its modern unpopularity is to be sought for in the circumstance of its satire having been principally directed to fashions of language that have long passed away, and consequently little understood, rather than in any great deficiency of invention. When it has been deeply studied, there are few comedies that will afford more gratification. It abounds with touches of the highest humour; and the playful tricks and discoveries are conducted with so much dexterity, that, when we arrive at the conclusion, the chief wonder is how the interest could have been preserved in the development of so extremely meagre a plot. Rightly considered, this drama, being a satire on the humour of conversation, could not have been woven from a story involving much situation other than the merely amusing, or from

any plot which invited the admission of the language of passion; for the free use of the latter would have been evidently inconsistent with the unity of the author's satirical design. — HALLIWELL-PHILLIPPS, J. O., 1855–79, *Memoranda on Love's Labour's Lost, p.* 18.

It is this foppery of delicate language, this fashionable plaything of his time, with which Shakespeare is occupied in "Love's Labour's Lost." He shows us the manner in all its stages; passing from the grotesque and vulgar pedantry of Holofernes, through the extravagant but polished caricature of Armado, to become the peculiar characteristic of a real though still quaint poetry in Biron himself, who is still chargeable even at his best with just a little affectation. As Shakespeare laughs broadly at it in Holofernes or Armado, so he is the analyst of its curious charm in Biron; and this analysis involves a delicate raillery by Shakespeare himself at his own chosen manner. — PATER, WALTER, 1878, *Appreciations, p.* 171.

During certain scenes we seem almost to stand again by the cradle of new born comedy, and hear the first lisping and laughing accents run over from her baby lips in bubbling rhyme; but when the note changes we recognise the speech of gods. For the first time in our literature the higher key of poetic or romantic comedy is finely touched to a fine issue. The divine instrument fashioned by Marlowe for tragic purposes alone has found at once its new sweet use in the hands of Shakespeare. The way is prepared for "As You Like It" and the "Tempest;" the language is discovered which will befit the lips of Rosalind and Miranda. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 47.

COMEDY OF ERRORS

1589–1623

After such sport, a "Comedy of Errors" (like to Plautus his Menechmus) was *played by the players;* so that night began and continued to the end, in nothing but confusion and errors; whereupon it was ever afterwards called the Night of Errors. — GESTA GRAYORUM, 1594.

As to the comic action which constitutes the chief bulk of this piece, if it be true that to excite laughter, awaken attention, and fix curiosity, be essential to its dramatic excellence, the "Comedy of Errors" cannot be pronounced an unsuccessful effort; both reader and spectator are hurried on to the close, through a series of thick-coming incidents, and under the pleasurable influence of novelty, expectation, and surprise; and the dialogue . . . is uniformly vivacious, pointed, and even effervescing. Shakspeare is visible, in fact, throughout the entire play, as well in the broad exuberance of its mirth, as in the cast of its more chastised parts, a combination of which may be found in the punishment and character of Pinch the pedagogue and conjurer, who is sketched in the strongest and most marked style of our author. If we consider, therefore, the construction of the fable, the narrowness of its basis, and that its powers of entertainment are almost exclusively confined to a continued deception of the external senses, we must confess that Shakspeare has not only improved on the Plautian model, but, making allowance for a somewhat too coarse vein of humour, has given to his production all the interest and variety that the nature and the limits of his subject would permit. — DRAKE, NATHAN, 1817, *Shakspeare and His Times, vol.* II, *p.* 288.

The myriad-minded man, our, and all men's, Shakspere, has in this piece presented us with a legitimate farce in exactest consonance with the philosophical principles and character of farce, as distinguished from comedy and from entertainments. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 292.

Until I saw it on the stage (not mangled into an opera), I had not imagined the extent of the mistakes, the drollery of them, their unabated continuance, till, at the end of the fourth act, they reached their climax with the assistance of Dr. Pinch, when the audience in their laughter rolled about like waves. . . . To the strange contrast of grave astonishment among the actors, with their laughable situations in the eyes of the spectators, who are let into the secret, is to be ascribed the irresistible effect. — BROWN, CHARLES ARMITAGE, 1838, *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems, pp.* 272, 273.

The "Comedy of Errors" is evidently one of Shakespeare's youthful works, and was probably written abou 1591. This is supported not only by the frequent occurrence of rhymes and the long-drawn Alexandrines (doggerel verse) employed by the earlier English dramatists, but also by the greater carefulness and regularity of the language and versification. . . . Another proof of its early origin is the fresh, youthful atmosphere of joke and jest which pervades the whole, a naïve pleasure in what is jocose and laughable for its own sake, and which, not being yet burdened by the weight of years, moves more lightly and more on the surface of things, and without that power and depth of humour which distinguishes the poet's maturer works. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art, tr. Schmitz.*

In this play Shakspere gayly confronts improbabilities, and requires the spectator to accept them. He adds to the twins Antipholus the twins Dromio. If we are in for improbability, let us at least be repaid for it by fun, and have that in abundance. Let the incredible become a two-fold incredibility, and it is none the worse. We may conclude that, while Shakspere was ready to try his hand upon a farcical subject, a single experiment satisfied him that this was not his province, for to such subjects he never returned. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1875–80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, p.* 50.

The "Comedy of Errors" not only surpasses the "Menæchmi" in the greater complexity of its plot, its greater variety of incident, but also in its more generous treatment of human nature. Not that elaborately wrought-out characters are to be sought in it; for this, it must be remembered, is Shakespeare's most absolutely comic, and almost farcical play, and in this particular class of work he never handled the incisive tool of an engraver, like Molière, — his pencil runs galloping over the canvas with a light fantastic touch; and this play is, moreover, one of his most youthful performances. — STAPFER, PAUL, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity, tr. Carey, p.* 150.

The reading of the play is like threading the mazes of a dream; where people and things are the same and not the same in the same moment. The mistakes, crosses, and vexations in the plot so rapidly succeed that to keep the course of events distinct in the mind is almost as desperate an achievement as following all the ramifications of a genealogical tree; and — may it be said? — about as useful. The piece, however, is amusing; and although

our intellectual remuneration for the time expended is not remarkable, yet we should bear in mind that it is essentially a drama of *action* and circumstance; and if it could be effectually represented, the result would be infinitely ludicrous. — CLARKE, CHARLES COWDEN, 1881, *Shakespeare-Characters, Second Series, quoted by Rolfe.*

Act III, Scene i. seems to have been derived from the "Amphitruo" of Plautus; in the Latin comedy Mercury keeps the real Amphitruo out of his own house, while Jupiter, the sham Amphitruo, is within with Alcmena, the real Amphitruo's wife. The introduction of the twin Dromios is Shakespeare's own device; and all the pathos of the play is his: there is nothing in the Latin original suggestive of Ægeon's touching story at the opening of the play, — in Plautus, the father of the twins is already dead, and there is no reunion of husband, wife, and children. In spite, however, of this romanticising of Plautus, Shakespeare has maintained throughout the play the hallowed unities of time and place, "the necessary companions," according to Academic criticism, "of all corporal actions." From this point of view "The Comedy of Errors" may be regarded as the final triumph of the New Romantic Drama over its opponents; it carried the warfare into the enemy's camp, and scored the signal victory of harmonising Old and New, — the conventional canons of Latin Comedy and the pathos of Romanticism. — GOLLANCZ, ISRAEL, 1894, *ed. Temple Shakespeare, Preface to Comedy of Errors, p.* viii.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

1590–1600

A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath beene sundry times pub | *lickely acted, by the Right honoura* | ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his | *seruants.* | *Written by William Shakespeare.* | Imprinted at London, for *Thomas Fisher*, and are to | be soulde at his shoppe, at the Signe of the White Hart, | in *Fleetestreete.* 1600. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1600.

I say, as it is applausfully written, and commended to posterity, in the Midsummer-Night's Dream: — if we offend, it is with our good will: we came with no intent but to offend, and show our simple skill. — TAYLOR, JOHN, 1622, *Sir Gregory Nonsense, vol.* I.

There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful Poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.

. . . . . .

Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

— MILTON, JOHN, 1633, *L'Allegro.*

September 29. — To the King's Theatre, where we saw "Midsummer's Night's Dream," which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1662, *Diary and Correspondence.*

The Comical part of this Play, is printed separately in 4°. and used to be acted at *Bartholomew* Fair, and other Markets in the Country by Strolers, under the Title of "Bottom the Weaver." — LANGBAINE, GERARD, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets, p.* 460.

Wild and fantastical as this play is, all the parts in their various modes are well written, and give the kind of pleasure which the author designed. Fairies in his time were much in fashion; common tradition had made them familiar, and Spenser's poem had made them great. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

It is astonishing that Shakespear should be considered, not only by foreigners, but by many of our own critics, as a gloomy and heavy writer, who painted nothing but "gorgons and hydras, and chimeras dire." His subtlety exceeds that of all other dramatic writers, insomuch that a celebrated person of the present day said that he regarded him rather as a metaphysician than a poet. His delicacy and sportive gaiety are infinite. In the "Midsummer Night's Dream" alone, we should imagine, there is more sweetness and beauty of description than in the whole range of French poetry put together. What we mean is this, that we will produce out of that single play ten passages, to which we do not think any ten passages in the works of the French poets can be opposed, displaying equal fancy and imagery. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 92.

It is, indeed, a fabric of the most buoyant and aerial texture, floating as it were between earth and heaven, and tinted with all the magic colouring of the rainbow.

"The earth hath bubbles as the water has,
And this is of them."

. . . The canvas, it is true, which he has stretched, has been since expanded, and new groupes have been introduced; but the outline and the mode of colouring which he employed have been invariably followed. It is, in short, to his picture of the fairy world, that we are indebted for the "Nymphidia" of Drayton; the "Robin Goodfellow" of Jonson; the miniatures of Fletcher and Browne; the full-length portraits of Herrick; the sly allusions of Corbet, and the spirited and picturesque sketches of Milton. — DRAKE, NATHAN, 1817, *Shakspeare and His Times, vol.* II, *p.* 299, 353.

It evidently belongs to the earlier period of Shakspeare's genius; poetical, as we account it, more than dramatic; yet rather so because the indescribable profusion of imaginative poetry in this play overpowers our senses till we can hardly observe any thing else, than from any deficiency of dramatic excellence. For in reality the structure of the fable, consisting as it does of three if not four actions, very distinct in their subjects and personages, yet wrought into each other without effort or confusion, displays the skill, or rather instinctive felicity, of Shakspeare, as much as in any play he has written. . . . The "Midsummer Night's Dream" is, I believe, altogether original in one of the most beautiful conceptions that ever visited the mind of a poet, — the fairy machinery. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol.* II, *pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 39, 40.

Of all his works, the "Midsummer Night's Dream" leaves the strongest impression on my mind, that this mis-

erable world must have, for once at least, contained a happy man. This play is so purely delicious, so little intermixed with the painful passions from which poetry distils her sterner sweets, so fragrant with hilarity, so bland and yet so bold, that I cannot imagine Shakspeare's mind to have been in any other frame than that of healthful ecstasy when the sparks of inspiration thrilled through his brain in composing it. — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1838, *ed. Shakspeare's Plays, Moxon ed., Life.*

This is, in several respects, the most remarkable composition of its author, and has probably contributed more to his general fame, as it has given a more peculiar evidence of the variety and brilliancy of his genius, than any other of his dramas. Not that it is in itself the noblest of his works, or even one of the highest order among them; but it is not only exquisite in its kind — it is also original and peculiar in its whole character, and of a class by itself. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare, vol.* II.

Bottom the weaver is the representative of the whole human race. His confidence in his own power is equally profound, whether he exclaims, "Let me play the lion too;" or whether he sings alone, "that they shall hear I am not afraid;" or whether, conscious that he is surrounded with spirits, he cries out, with his voice of authority, "Where's Peasblossom?" In every situation Bottom is the same, — the same personification of that self-love which the simple cannot conceal, and the wise can with difficulty suppress. — KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere, bk.* v, *ch.* ii, *p.* 209.

I know not any play of Shakespeare's in which the language is so uniformly unexceptionable as this. It is all poetry, and sweeter poetry was never written. — COLERIDGE, HARTLEY, 1849–51, *Essays and Marginalia, vol.* II, *p.* 138.

What a rich set of fellows those "mechanicals" are! and how individual are their several characteristics! Bully Bottom, the epitome of all the conceited donkeys that ever strutted and straddled on this stage of the world. . . . He is a choice arabesque impersonation of that colouring of conceit which, by the half-malice of the world, has been said to tinge the disposition of actors, as invariably as the rouge does their cheeks. Peter Quince, although the delegated manager of the company, fades into a shadow, a cipher, a nonentity before him. — CLARKE, CHARLES COWDEN, 1863, *Shakespeare-Characters, p.* 97.

"The Midsummer-Night's Dream" is especially remarkable for its beauty as a composition. The theme throughout is treated with care as well as felicity. In structure, in diction, in characterisation, and poetical elegance, it is, we may boldly say, faultless. Nor is it less fitted for the stage than for the closet. However it may be acted, whether as a ballet with a favourite cantatrice in the part of Oberon, or otherwise as a Scandinavian legend with the faery monarch properly bearded, its histrionic representation is always charming. Its execution is as exquisite as its conception is delicate. — HERAUD, JOHN A., 1865, *Shakspere, His Inner Life as Intimated in His Works, p.* 186.

In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" attains to a consummation which it had never before reached, either in our own, or in any other, dramatic literature. English romantic comedy, in a word, was now represented by an example, not of sudden (for nothing is sudden in literature), but of radiant perfection. — WARD, ADOLPHUS WILLIAM, 1875–99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature, vol.* II, *p.* 273.

In which some of his most delicate and sprightly verses have revelled. The whole play expresses humour on a revel, and brings into one human feeling the super-nature, the caprice and gross mischance, the serious drift of life. — WEISS, JOHN, 1876, *Wit, Humor, and Shakspeare.*

Here each kind of excellence is equal throughout; there are here no purple patches on a gown of serge, but one seamless and imperial robe of a single dye. Of the lyric or the prosaic part, the counterchange of loves and laughters, of fancy fine as air and imagination high as heaven, what need can there be for any one to shame himself by the helpless attempt to say some word not utterly unworthy? Let it suffice us to accept this poem as the landmark of our first stage, and pause to look back from it on what lies behind us of partial or of perfect work. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 49.

In no other of his works has Shakespeare more brilliantly shown that complete dominance of theme which is manifested in the perfect preservation of proportion. The strands of action are braided with astonishing grace. The fourfold story is never allowed to lapse into dulness

or obscurity. There is caprice, but no distortion. The supernatural machinery is never wrested toward the production of startling or monstrous effects, but it deftly impels each mortal personage in the natural line of human development. The dream-spirit is maintained throughout, and perhaps it is for this reason, — that the poet was living and thinking and writing in the free, untrammelled world of his own spacious and airy imagination, and not in any definite sphere of this earth, — that "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is so radically superior to the other comedies written by him at about this period. — WINTER, WILLIAM, 1888, *Augustin Daly's Arrangement for Representation, Preface, p.* 12.

Here he gave his fancy the reins, and showed, as he created Titania and Oberon, and then, again, a Bottom, that nothing in the broad domain of poesy was to him impossible or unattainable. The moral maturity of the poet appears, however, most strikingly in the figure of Theseus, with his manly character, his delicacy of feeling, and his broad humanity. — TEN BRINK, BERNHARD, 1892–95, *Five Lectures on Shakespeare, tr. Franklin, p.* 78.

Enthralled by Shakespeare's art, and submissive to it, we accept without question every stroke of time's thievish progress, be it fast or slow; and, at the close, acknowledge that the promise of the opening lines has been redeemed. But if, in spite of all our best endeavours, our feeble wits refuse to follow him, Shakespeare smiles gently and benignantly as the curtain falls, and begging us to take no offence at shadows, bids us think it all as

no more yielding than a dream. — FURNESS, HORACE HOWARD, 1895, *New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, A Midsommer Nights Dreame, Preface, p.* xxxiv.

His first masterpiece is a masterpiece of grace, both lyrical and comic. . . . How is one to speak adequately of "A Midsummer Night's Dream?" It is idle to dwell upon the slightness of the character-drawing, for the poet's effort is not after characterisation; and, whatever its weak points, the poem as a whole is one of the tenderest, most original, and most perfect Shakespeare ever produced. It is Spenser's fairy-poetry developed and condensed; it is Shelley's spirit-poetry anticipated by more than two centuries. And the airy dream is shot with whimsical parody. The frontiers of Elf-land and Clown-land meet and mingle. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 76.

Shakespeare's joy in the possession of the poetic gift, and his earliest delight in life, found radiant expression in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," a masterpiece of poetic fancy, and the gayest and most beautiful of poetic comedies. Rich as this drama is in humorous effects, it is so essentially lyrical in spirit that it stands alone in English poetry; an exquisite expansion of the masque or festival poem into a drama of pure fancy and daring imagination. — MABIE, HAMILTON WRIGHT, 1900, *William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man, p.* 203.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

1590–92

That this play is rightly attributed to Shakspeare, I have little doubt. If it be taken from him, to whom shall it be given? This question may be asked of all the disputed plays, except "Titus Andronicus;" and it will be found more credible, that Shakspeare might sometimes sink below his highest flights, than that any other should rise up to his lowest. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

The characters are drawn with strength and truth, and it is remarkable that in this play we have the first idea of what has been since called genteel comedy. The elegance, yet the contrast in Valentine and Protheus, is a very striking picture, not only of the etiquette, but the perfidy of polite life; for Protheus is more corrupted by education than nature, of which his remorse and his contrition are proofs, while Valentine has a mind so correctly inclined to rectitude that fashion and folly cannot corrupt it. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 38.

This is little more than the first outline of a comedy loosely sketched in. It is the story of a novel dramatised with very little labour or pretension; yet there are passages of high poetical spirit, and of inimitable quaintness of humour, which are undoubtedly Shakespear's, and there is throughout the conduct of the fable a careless grace and felicity which marks it for his. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 187.

The "Two Gentlemen of Verona" ranks above the "Comedy of Errors," though still in the third class of Shakspeare's plays. It was probably the first English comedy in which characters are drawn from social life, at once ideal and true: the cavaliers of Verona and their lady-loves are graceful personages, with no transgression of the probabilities of nature; but they are not exactly the real men and women of the same rank in England. The imagination of Shakspeare must have been guided by some familiarity with romances before it struck out this comedy. It contains some very poetical lines. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 37.

This play appears to me enriched with all the freshness of youth; with strong indications of his future matured poetical power and dramatic effect. It is the day-spring of genius, full of promise, beauty, and quietude, before the sun has arisen to its splendour. I can likewise discern in it his peculiar gradual development of character, his minute touches, each tending to complete a portrait: and if these are not executed by the master-hand as shown in his later plays, they are by the same apprentice-hand, each touch of strength sufficient to harmonize with the whole. — BROWN, CHARLES ARMITAGE, 1838, *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems, p.* 231.

In parts, no doubt, the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" is sparkling with beauties, but as a whole it betrays a certain youthful awkwardness, and in execution a want of sustained power and depth. The composition is distinguished by the easy and harmonious flow of its language, by a peculiar freshness of view, by the *naïveté* of the par-

ticular thoughts, an unrestrained burst of wit and humour (*e.g.* in Speed and Launce), and by the delineation of the dramatic characters, which although but sketchily executed, is nevertheless striking, and invariably truthful. On the other hand, both the general view and the particular thought are deficient in depth; the parts do not readily round themselves off and combine into a whole; much is merely indicated which ought to have been more fully developed, and the conclusion especially is brought about too rapidly and without due preparation. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art, p.* 285.

The composition, as a whole, does not seem to have been poured forth with the rapid abundance of his later works; but, in its graver parts, bears evidence of the young author's careful elaboration, seldom daring to deviate from the habits of versification to which his muse had been accustomed, and fearful of venturing on any untried novelty of expression. . . . Upon the whole, the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," whatever rank of merit may be assigned to it by critics, will always be read and studied with deeper interest than it can probably excite as a mere literary performance, because it exhibits to us the great dramatist at a most interesting point in his career; giving striking, but imperfect and irregular, indications of his future powers. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

The plot seems to have been, in the main, of our poet's own invention; though what relates to Proteus and Julia may have been suggested, mediately or immediately, by the story of Felix and Felismena in the Diana of Montemayor. Indeed the points of resemblance are such that

I feel confident the poet must have been acquainted with that part of the Diana; and yet it was not translated till 1598. — KEIGHTLEY, THOMAS, 1867, *The Shakespeare-Expositor, p.* 22.

The "Two Gentlemen" is certainly far less beautiful in fancy than the "Dream," but it is a great advance on that play in dramatic construction. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere.*

There is an even sweetness, a simple equality of grace in thought and language which keeps the whole poem in tune, written as it is in a subdued key of unambitious harmony. In perfect unity and keeping the composition of this beautiful sketch may perhaps be said to mark a stage of advance, a new point of work attained, a faint but sensible change of manner, signalised by increased firmness of hand and clearness of outline. Slight and swift in execution as it is, few and simple as are the chords here struck of character and emotion, every shade of drawing and every note of sound is at one with the whole scheme of form and music. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 48.

ROMEO AND JULIET

1591–3

AN | EXCELLENT | conceited Tragedie | OF | Romeo and Iuliet. | As it hath been often (with great applause) | plaid publiquely, by the right Ho | nourable the L. of *Hunsdon* | his Seruants. | LONDON, | Printed by Iohn Danter. | 1597. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1597.

Two households, both alike in dignity
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life,
Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

— SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM, 1597, *Romeo and Juliet, Prologue.*

March Ist. — To the Opera, and there saw "Romeo and Juliet," the first time it was ever acted; but it is a play of itself the worst that ever I heard in my life, and the worst acted that ever I saw these people do, and I am resolved to go no more to see the first time of acting, for they were all of them out more or less. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1662, *Diary and Correspondence.*

Shakespear show'd the best of his skill in his Mercutio, and he said himself, that he was forc'd to kill him in the third act, to prevent being kill'd by him. But, for my part, I cannot find he was so dangerous a person: I see nothing in him but what was so exceeding harmless, that he might have lived to the end of the play, and died in his bed, without offence to any man. — DRYDEN, JOHN, 1672, *The Conquest of Granada. Second Part. Defence of the Epilogue.*

"Romeo and Juliet" is best known by that copy of it which is generally performed, and in which Garrick has very judiciously done little more than make Shakespear alter his own play, fitting the catastrophe to the original invention of the novelist. The two grand points that Garrick, by the advice of his friends, has insisted on, are the expunging the idea of Rosalind, and Romeo's sudden inconstancy on the first impression of Juliet's superior beauty, and heightening the catastrophe, by Romeo's first swallowing the poison, then in the extacy of finding Juliet survive, forgetting the desperate act he had committed, and flattering himself with a delusive hope of future happiness, and, again, the astonishment and delight of Juliet at recovering her lover, all which is instantly damped by a discovery that her fallacious hopes are to be but momentary. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 43.

Who can repress a groan at the sight of an enlightened nation, that counts among its critics a Pope and an Addison, going into raptures over the description of an Apothecary in "Romeo and Juliet?" It is the most hideous and disgusting burlesque. True it is that a flash of lightning illumines it, as in all Shakspere's shadows. Romeo utters a reflection on the unfortunate wretch who clings so closely to life burdened though he be with every wretchedness. — CHATEAUBRIAND, FRANÇOIS RENÉ, VICOMTE DE, 1801, *Shakspere ou Shakspeare.*

By the manner in which he has handled it, it has become a glorious song of praise on that inexpressible feeling which ennobles the soul and gives to it its highest sublimity, and which elevates even the senses themselves

into soul, and at the same time is a melancholy elegy on its frailty from its own nature and external circumstances: at once the deification and the burial of love. It appears here like a heavenly spark that, descending to the earth, is converted into a flash of lightning, by which mortal creatures are almost in the same moment set on fire and consumed. Whatever is most intoxicating in the odour of a southern spring, languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous on the first opening of the rose, is breathed into this poem. But even more rapidly than the earliest blossoms of youth and beauty decay, it hurries on from the first timidly-bold declaration of love and modest return to the most unlimited passion, to an irrevocable union; then, amidst alternating storms of rapture and despair, to the death of the two lovers, who still appear enviable as their love survives them, and as by their death they have obtained a triumph over every separating power. — SCHLEGEL, AUGUSTUS WILLIAM, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. Black, Lecture XII.*

Of the truth of Juliet's story they[1] seem tenacious to a degree, insisting on the fact — giving a date (1303), and showing a tomb. It is a plain, open, and partly decayed sarcophagus, with withered leaves in it, in a wild and desolate conventual garden, once a cemetery, now ruined to the very graves. The situation struck me as very appropriate to the legend, being blighted as their love. — BYRON, LORD, 1816, *Letters.*

O! how shall I describe that exquisite ebullience and overflow of youthful life, wafted on over the laughing

[1] The Veronese.

waves of pleasure and prosperity, as a wanton beauty that distorts the face on which she knows her lover is gazing enraptured, and wrinkles her forehead in the triumph of its smoothness! Wit ever wakeful, fancy busy and procreative as an insect, courage, an easy mind that, without cares of its own, is at once disposed to laugh away those of others, and yet to be interested in them — these and all congenial qualities, melting into the common *copula* of them all, the man of rank and the gentleman, with all its excellences and all its weaknesses, constitute the character of Mercutio! — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 324.

What can be more truthful than the love of Romeo and Juliet, so young, so ardent, so unreflecting, full at once of physical passion and of moral tenderness, without restraint, and yet without coarseness, because delicacy of heart ever combines with the transports of the senses! There is nothing subtle or factitious in it, and nothing cleverly arranged by the poet; it is neither the pure love of piously exalted imaginations, nor the licentious love of palled and perverted lives; it is love itself — love complete, involuntary and sovereign, as it bursts forth in early youth, in the heart of man, at once simple and diverse, as God made it. "Romeo and Juliet" is truly the tragedy of love, as "Othello" is that of jealousy, and "Macbeth" that of ambition. . . . Wherever they are not disfigured by conceits, the lines in "Romeo and Juliet" are perhaps the most graceful and brilliant that ever flowed from Shakspeare's pen. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times, pp.* 167, 173.

I am inclined to think that the rôle of Friar Lawrence the Poet wrote for himself; in it is every variety of tone without its ever rising to the height of passionateness — golden words, part instructive, part soothing or consolatory; at last from these holy lips issue the sighs and the plaints of the unhappy lovers. — TIECK, JOHANN LUDWIG, 1826, *Dramaturgische Blatter, vol.* I.

Romeo and Juliet are not poetical beings placed on a prosaic back-ground; . . . but every circumstance, and every personage, and every shade of character in each tends to the development of the sentiment which is the subject of the drama. The poetry, too, the richest that can possibly be conceived, is interfused through all the characters; the splendid imagery lavished upon all with the careless prodigality of genius; and the whole is lighted up into such a sunny brilliance of effect, as though Shakspeare had really transported himself into Italy, and had drunk to intoxication of her genial atmosphere. How truly it has been said, that "although Romeo and Juliet are in love, they are not love-sick!" What a false idea would anything of the mere whining amoroso, give us of Romeo, such as he really is in Shakspeare — the noble, gallant, ardent, brave, and witty! And Juliet — with even less truth could the phrase or idea apply to her! . . . It is flushed with the genial spirit of the south: it tastes of youth, and of the essence of youth; of life, and of the very sap of life. We have indeed the struggle of love against evil destinies, and a thorny world; the pain, the grief, the anguish, the terror, the despair; the aching adieu; the pang unutterable of parted affection; and rapture, truth, and tenderness trampled into an early grave:

but still an Elysian grace lingers round the whole, and the blue sky of Italy bends over all! — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

The incidents in Romeo and Juliet are rapid, various, unintermitting in interest, sufficiently probable, and tending to the catastrophe. The most regular dramatist has hardly excelled one writing for an infant and barbarian stage. It is certain that the observation of the unity of time, which we find in this tragedy, unfashionable as the name of unity has become in our criticism, gives an intenseness of interest to the story, which is often diluted and dispersed in a dramatic history. No play of Shakspeare is more frequently represented, or honored with more tears. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 43.

To eulogize this luxuriant drama would be like gilding refined gold. — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1838, *ed. Shakspeare's Plays, Moxon ed., Life.*

I consider Romeo designed to represent the character of an *unlucky* man — a man, who, with the best views and fairest intentions, is perpetually so unfortunate as to fail in every aspiration, and, while exerting himself to the utmost in their behalf, to involve all whom he holds dearest in misery and ruin. Had any other passion or pursuit occupied Romeo, he would have been equally unlucky as in his love. Ill-fortune has marked him for her own. From the beginning to end he intends the best; but his interfering is ever for the worst. . . . If we desire to moralize with the harsh-minded satirist, who

never can be suspected of romance, we should join with him in extracting as a moral from the play —

> "Nullum numen habes, si sit prudentia; nos te
> Nos facimus, Fortuna, deam, caeloque locamus;"

and attribute the mishaps of Romeo, not to want of fortune, but of prudence. Philosophy and poetry differ not in essentials, and the stern censure of Juvenal is just. But still, when looking on the timeless tomb of Romeo, and contemplating the short and sad career through which he ran, we cannot help recollecting his mourning words over his dying friend, and suggest as an inscription over the monument of the luckless gentleman,

> "I thought all for the best."

— MAGINN, WILLIAM, 1842–57, *Shakespeare Papers.*

While it has profoundly made use of all that is most true and deep in the innermost nature of love, the poet has imbued himself also with those external forms which the human mind had long before created in this domain of poetry. He preferred rather not to be original than to misconceive the form suitable; he preferred to borrow the expression and the style which centuries long had fashioned and developed, for in this the very test of their genuineness and durability lay; and thus the lyric love-poetry of all ages is, as it were, recognised in the forms, images, and expressions employed in this tragedy of love. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1845–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, p.* 208.

Who does not recall those lovely summer nights in which the forces of nature seem eager for development, and constrained to remain in drowsy languor — a min-

gling of intense heat, superabundant energy, impetuous power, and silent freshness? The nightingale sings in the depths of the woods. The flower-cups are half closed. A pale lustre is shed over the foliage of the forests and upon the brow of the hills. The deep repose conceals, we are aware, a procreant force; the melancholy reserve of nature is the mask of a passionate emotion. Under the paleness and the coolness of the night, you divine restrained ardors, and flowers which brood in silence, impatient to shine forth. Such is the peculiar atmosphere with which Shakspeare has enveloped one of his most wonderful creations — "Romeo and Juliet." Not only the substance, but the forms of the language come from the South. Italy was the inventor of the tale: she drew it from her national memorials, her old family feuds, her annals filled with amorous and bloody intrigues. In its lyric accent, its blindness of passion, its blossoming and abundant vitality, in the brilliant imagery, in the bold composition, no one can fail to recognize Italy. Romeo utters himself like a sonnet of Petrarch, with the same refined choice and the same antitheses; there is the same grace and the same pleasure in versifying passion in allegorical stanzas. Juliet, too, is wholly the woman of Italy; with small gift of forethought, and absolutely ingenuous in her *abandon*, she is at once vehement and pure. — CHASLES, PHILARÈTE, 1851, *Études sur W. Shakspeare, Marie Stuart, et l'Arétin, pp.* 141, 142.

The language of the lovers often degenerates into quibbling; but what they feel with naivete they express with affectation. What they say is an idyll of the ballroom; what they feel is a most gracious and vivid picture of innocent love. And it is under this image that the two

lovers remain graven on our imagination. All the world over, when two hearts, young and pure, fall in love with each other, if they are cultivated, they think of Romeo and Juliet; if they are uncultivated, they do better than think of them, they re-enact them. — GIRARDIN, SAINT-MARC, 1855, *Cours de Litterature Dramatique, vol.* III, *p.* 364.

"Romeo and Juliet" is a youthful work; if Shakespeare had written it later he would doubtless have lopped the *concetti* and the flowers of rhetoric, but he might perchance have drawn those passionate emotions with less ardor. Whoever touches the play under pretext of correcting it, cannot efface a blemish without erasing the brilliant colors of this youthful and burning poetry. — MÉZIÈRES, ALFRED, 1860, *Shakespeare ses Œuvres et ses Critiques.*

In this first great dramatic work of Shakespeare we find: Invention, none; it is literally translated from an Italian novel: a vitiated taste, since the most scandalous obscenity usurps the place of that virgin purity which is as necessary to style as to love: a style in a great measure depraved by the Italian affectation of that age, when authors made jests in place of revealing what should have been the true and pure sentiments of the situations in which they placed their characters: pathos chilled by the false over-refinement of the expressions. Such are the defects of Shakespeare in this piece. But after this is admitted, and too well proved by the citations over which we have thrown the veil of omission, its beauties reveal a great genius, a splendid imagination, a soul full of pathos and a master of hearts. — LAMARTINE, ALPHONSE MARIE LOUIS DE, 1865, *Shakespeare et son Œuvre, p.* 132.

We found it a very old and time-worn edifice, built round an ample court, and we knew it, as we had been told we should, by the cap carven in stone above the interior of the grand portal. The family, anciently one of the principal in Verona, has fallen from much of its former greatness. . . . There was a great deal of stable litter, and many empty carts standing about in the court; and if I might hazard the opinion formed upon these and other appearances, I should say that old Capulet has now gone to keeping a hotel, united with the retail liquor business, both in a small way. — HOWELLS, WILLIAM DEAN, 1868, *Italian Journeys*, *p.* 306.

In two of the scenes we may say that the whole heart or spirit of "Romeo and Juliet" is summed up and distilled into perfect and pure expression; and these two are written in blank verse of equable and blameless melody. Outside the garden scene in the second act and the balcony scene in the third, there is much that is fanciful and graceful, much of elegiac pathos and fervid if fantastic passion; much also of superfluous rhetoric and (as it were) of wordy melody, which flows and foams hither and thither into something of extravagance and excess; but in these two there is no flaw, no outbreak, no superflux, and no failure. Throughout certain scenes of the third and fourth acts I think it may be reasonably and reverently allowed that the river of verse has broken its banks, not as yet through the force and weight of its gathering stream, but merely through the weakness of the barriers or boundaries found insufficient to confine it. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare*, *p.* 35.

There is in this play no scope for surmise, no possible misunderstanding of the chief characters or of the poet's purpose, such as there are in "Hamlet" and "Macbeth." The chill mists and vapours of the North seem to shroud these plays in an atmosphere of mystery, uncertainty, and gloom. But here all is distinct and luminous as the vivid sunshine, or the clear, tender moonlight of the South. You have but to throw your mind back into the history of the time, and to let your heart warm and your imagination kindle with the hot blood and quick-flashing fancies of the Italian temperament, and the whole tale of love and woe stands fully revealed before you. Still, to judge Juliet rightly, we must have clear ideas of Romeo, of her parents, and of all the circumstances that determined her conduct. — MARTIN, LADY (HELENA FAUCIT), 1881, *On Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters, p.* 192.

Is there a more delightful love-poem than "Romeo and Juliet?" yet it is full of conceits. . . . No one has drawn the true passion of love like Shakespeare. — TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD, 1883, *Some Criticisms on Poets, Memoir by His Son, vol.* II, *p.* 291.

But though in *subject* Shakespeare follows Brooke, it need hardly be said that in its *spirit* — in its transfiguration of the story — the play altogether transcends the poem; a greater effort than Brooke's wearisome production would pale its uneffectual fire before the glowing warmth of this Song of Songs of Romantic Passion. — GOLLANCZ, ISRAEL, 1896, *ed. Temple Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Preface, p.* x.

"Romeo and Juliet" is perhaps not such a flawless work of art as "A Midsummer Night's Dream." It is not so delicately, so absolutely harmonious. But it is an achievement of much greater significance and moment; it is the great and typical love-tragedy of the world. It soars immeasurably above all later attempts to approach it. The Danish critic who should mention such a tragedy as "Axel and Valborg" in the same breath with this play would show more patriotism than artistic sense. Beautiful as Oehlenschläger's drama is, the very nature of its theme forbids us to compare it with Shakespeare's. It celebrates constancy rather than love; it is a poem of tender emotions, of womanly magnanimity and chivalrous virtue, at war with passion and malignity. It is not, like "Romeo and Juliet," at once the pæan and the dirge of passion. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 92.

RICHARD II.

1593

THE | TRAGEDIE OF KING RI | CHARD THE SE | COND. | *As it hath beene publikely acted* | *by the right Honourable the* | *Lorde Chamberlaine his Ser* | *uants.* | LONDON | Printed by Valentine Simmes for Androw Wise, and | are to be sold at his shop in Paules church yard at | the signe of the Angel. | 1597. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1597.

This play is one of those which Shakspeare has apparently revised; but as success in works of invention is not always proportionate to labour, it is not finished at last

with the happy force of some other of his tragedies, nor can be said much to affect the passions, or enlarge the understanding. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

We cannot suppose a more awful and affecting transaction, than a prince brought before his subjects, compelled to deprive himself of his royalty, and to resign his crown to the popular claimant, his near relation. This is a subject worthy the genius of Shakspeare; and yet, it must be confessed, he has fallen infinitely short of his usual powers to excite that tumult of passion which the action merited; he was ever too fond of quibble and conceit, but here he has indulged himself beyond his usual predilection for them; and I cannot help thinking, from this circumstance alone, that "Richard II" was written and acted much earlier than the date in the stationers books of 1597. — DAVIES, THOMAS, 1784, *Dramatic Micellanies, vol.* I, *p.* 169.

Certainly we cannot trace in it his usual force, either as to the characters or the language. The probability is that it was written in a hurry, which by the way is no excuse, and, as the circumstances are wholly taken from the historians and chroniclers of that day, many passages may have been literally transplanted from the history to the play. This having been done, the subject was found so unproductive that the author never thought it worth his while to finish it; and then the utmost we can say is that Shakespear was to blame for letting a play come forward unworthy of his reputation. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 68.

In itself, and for the closet, I feel no hesitation in placing it as the first and most admirable of all Shakspere's purely historical plays. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 256.

He who had given old Lear, in his misery, so many noble and faithful friends, could not find one for Richard; the king had fallen, stripped and naked, into the hands of the poet, as he fell from his throne; and in himself alone the poet has been obliged to seek all his resources; the character of Richard II. is, therefore, one of the profoundest conceptions of Shakspeare. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times, p.* 308.

It is this wonderful subjection of the poetical power to the higher law of truth — to the poetical truth, which is the highest truth, comprehending and expounding the historical truth — which must furnish the clue to the proper understanding of the drama of "Richard II." It appears to us that, when the poet first undertook

"to ope
The purple testament of bleeding war." —

to unfold the roll of the causes and consequences of that usurpation of the house of Lancaster which plunged three or four generations of Englishmen in bloodshed and misery — he approached the subject with an inflexibility of purpose as totally removed as it was possible to be from the levity of a partisan. — KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere, bk.* iv, *ch.* i, *p.* 152.

Beyond the scattered touches and the insinuations which denote the inability of the king, and his wavering between unseasonable power and weakness, the poet has chosen only one event for greater dramatic prominence, and with this the catastrophe of Richard's fate is united, namely, the knightly quarrel between Bolingbroke and Norfolk with which the play begins. . . . Shakespeare writes here an immortal lesson upon the royalty of God's grace and the law of inviolability. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1849–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, pp.* 284, 288.

"Richard II." is one of those plays of Shakespeare's which have never taken firm hold of the stage. Its exclusively political action and its lack of female characters are mainly to blame for this. But it is exceedingly interesting as his first attempt at independent treatment of a historical theme, and it rises far above the play which served as its model. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 143.

RICHARD III.

1594

The Tragedy of | King Richard the third. | Containing, | His treacherous Plots against his brother Clarence: | the pittiefull murther of his innocent nephewes: | his tyrannicall vsurpation: with the whole course | of his detested life, and most deserued death. | As it hath beene lately Acted by the | Right honourable the Lord Chamber- | laine his seruants. | AT LONDON | Printed by

Valentine Sims, for Andrew Wise, | dwelling in Paules Chuch-yard, at the | Signe of the Angell. | 1597. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1597.

To him that impt my fame with Clio's quill,
Whose magick rais'd me from oblivion's den;
That writ my storie on the Muses hill,
And with my actions dignifi'd his pen:
He that from Helicon sends many a rill,
Whose nectared veines, are drunke by thirstie men;
Crown'd be his stile with fame, his head with bayes;
And none detract, but gratulate his praise.

— BROOKE, CHRISTOPHER, 1614, *The Ghost of Richard Third, pt.* ii, *st.* i, *ed. Grosart.*

Mine host was full of ale and history,
And in the morning when he brought us nigh
Where the two Roses join'd, you would suppose
Chaucer ne'er made the Romaunt of the Rose.
Hear him. See ye yon wood? There Richard lay
With his whole army. Look the other way,
And, lo! where Richmond in a bed of gorse
Encamp'd himself o'er night, and all his force:
Upon this hill they met. Why, he could tell
The inch where Richmond stood, where Richard fell,
Besides what of his knowledge he could say,
He had authentic notice from the play;
Which I might guess by 's must'ring up the ghosts,
And policies not incident to hosts;
But chiefly by that one perspicuous thing
Where he mistook a player for a king.
For when he would have said, King Richard died,
And call'd, A horse! a horse! he Burbage cried.

— CORBET, RICHARD, 1617, *Iter Boreale.*

This is one of the most celebrated of our author's performances; yet I know not whether it has not happened to him as to others, to be praised most, when praise is not most deserved. That this play has scenes noble in themselves, and very well contrived to strike in the exhibition, cannot be denied. But some parts are trifling, others shocking, and some improbable. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

One of the most prominent and detestable vices indeed, in Richard's character, his hypocrisy, connected, as it always is, in his person, with the most profound skill and dissimulation, has, owing to the various parts which it induces him to assume, most materially contributed to the popularity of this play, both on the stage, and in the closet. He is one who can

— "frame his face to all occasions,"

and accordingly appears, during the course of his career, under the contrasted forms of a subject and a monarch, a politician and a wit, a soldier and a suitor, a sinner and a saint; and in all with such apparent ease and fidelity to nature, that while to the explorer of the human mind he affords, by his penetration and address, a subject of peculiar interest and delight, he offers to the practised performer a study well calculated to call forth his fullest and finest exertions. — DRAKE, NATHAN, 1817, *Shakspeare and His Times, vol.* II, *p.* 374.

"Richard III." may be considered as properly a stage-play: it belongs to the theatre, rather than to the closet. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 160.

If we compare these speeches (of Edmund in Lear, and of Iago in Othello) with Richard's, and in like manner if we compare the way in which Iago's plot is first sown, and springs up and gradually grows and ripens in his brain, with Richard's downright enunciation of his projected series of crimes from the first, we may discern the contrast between the youth and the mature manhood of the mightiest intellect that ever lived upon earth, a contrast almost equally observable in the difference between the diction and metre of the two plays, and not unlike that between a great river rushing along turbidly in spring, bearing the freshly melted snows from Alpine mountains, with flakes of light scattered here and there over its surface, and the same river, when its waters have subsided into their autumnal tranquillity, and compose a vast mirror for the whole landscape around them, and for the sun and stars and sky and clouds overhead. — HARE, A. W. AND J. C., 1827–48, *Guesses at Truth.*

This tragedy forms an epoch in the history of our poet and in that of dramatic poetry. In his preceding dramas he showed rather the suppleness than the knotted strength of his genius; but in the subtle cunning, the commanding courage, the lofty pride and ambition, the remorselessness of the third Richard, and in the whole sublime depravity of his character, he reminds us of the eulogium passed by Fuseli on Michael Angelo, who says, that Michael could stamp sublimity on the hump of a dwarf. So complete was this picture of human guilt, that Milton, in seeking for a guilty hero, was obliged to descend to the nether regions. — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1838, *ed. Shakspeare's Plays, Moxon ed., Life.*

"Richard III." is, and long has been — taking the stage and the closet together — the most universally and uninterruptedly popular of its author's works. Few of Shakespeare's plays passed through more than two or three editions, as they originally appeared, separately, in the customary form of quarto pamphlets. Of "Hamlet," which seems to have been the most popular of the other tragedies, there are but six of these editions; while of "Richard III.," between 1597 and 1634, we have, in addition to the copies in the first two folios, no less than eight separate editions, still preserved; and it is possible that there may have been yet another, no longer extant. There are also more references and allusions to it, in the writings of Shakespeare's contemporaries, and in those of the next generation of authors, than to any other of his works. For instance, Bishop Corbet, in his poems, Fuller, in his "Church History," and Milton, in one of his prose controversial tracts, all refer to it as familiar to their readers. It has kept perpetual possession of the stage, either in its primitive form, or as altered and adapted to the tastes of the times by Colley Cibber or by John Kemble. In one or other of these forms Richard III. has been the favourite character of all the eminent English tragedians, from Burbage, the original "Crookback," who was identified in his day, in the public mind, with the part, through the long succession of the monarchs of the English stage — Betterton, Cibber, Quin, Garrick, Henderson, Kemble, Cooke, Kean — down to our own days. Yet, in all the higher attributes of the poetic drama, "Richard III." bears no comparison with the poet's greater tragedies, or with the graver scenes of his more brilliant comedies. Intellectually and poetically, it must be assigned to a much lower class than "Romeo

and Juliet," or "Othello;" than "Lear" or "Macbeth;" than the "Tempest" or the "Merchant of Venice." — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

If a portion of the bitterness and soured rage that lies in Richard's nature was rooted in this self-contempt of his outward appearance, his contempt of men on the other hand is grounded on the liberal gifts which nature has bestowed on his mind, and on the self-reliance which a comparison with the men around him inspired. Of consummate powers of speech, of animated mind and piercing wit, Shakespeare depicts him throughout in accordance with the Chronicle; in his hypocritical wooing of Anne, in his sarcasm, and in his equivocal language, this gift of a biting and malicious wit is called into play. He exhibits similar adroitness in his dealings with men; and here his contempt of all, scarcely to be dissembled even by this master of dissimulation, is clearly manifested. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1845–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, p.* 264.

The drama is not so much a composition of co-operative characters, mutually developing and developed, as the prolonged yet hurried outcome of a single character, to which the other persons serve but as exponents and conductors; as if he were a volume of electricity disclosing himself by means of others, and quenching their active powers in the very process of doing so. — HUDSON, HENRY NORMAN, 1872–83, *Shakespeare: His Life, Art, and Characters, vol.* II, *p.* 156.

The references in this play to the three parts of "Henry VI." are so many as to make it impossible to deny the

serial character and unity of the whole tetralogy, whatever questions may be raised as to the authorship of parts of it. The whole exhibits the fate of virtuous weakness in the face of unscrupulous strength, and concludes with the fate of this strength in the face of Providence. Henry VI. perishes by natural causes. The forces which destroy Richard III. are wholly supernatural. Three women are introduced whose curses are inevitable, like those of the Eumenides. Ghosts prophesy the event of a battle. Men's imprecations on themselves are literally fulfilled. Their destiny is made more to depend on their words than their actions; it is removed out of their hands, and placed in those of some unearthly power which hears prayer and judges the earth. As if the lesson of the poet was that there is human remedy where there are ordinary human motives, but that for power joined with Machiavellian policy the only remedy is patience dependent on Providence. — SIMPSON, RICHARD, 1874, *The Politics of Shakspere's Historical Plays, New Shakspere Society Transactions, p.* 396.

He typifies man contending against society, the individual defying by the strength of his own intellect and will all the forces naturally banded together against a rebellion such as his, and succumbing at last, like the boar caught in the toils of the huntsmen, who strike down the baffled lord of the forest like a rabid cur. — WARD, ADOLPHUS WILLIAM, 1875–99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature, vol.* II, *p.* 262.

The demonic intensity which distinguishes the play proceeds from the character of Richard as from its source and centre. As with the chief personages of Marlowe's

plays, so Richard in this play rather occupies the imagination by audacity and force than insinuates himself through some subtle solvent, some magic and mystery of art. His character does not grow upon us; from the first it is complete. We are not curious to discover what Richard is, as we are curious to come into presence of the soul of Hamlet. We are in no doubt about Richard; but it yields us a strong sensation to observe him in various circumstances and situations; we are roused and animated by the presence of almost superhuman energy and power, even though that power and that energy be malign. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1875–80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, p.* 161.

Villain as he is, he has the villain's coolness too. He never loses temper, except when he strikes the third messenger. As a general he is as skilful as Henry the Fifth, and looks to his sentinels; while, like Henry the Fourth, he is up and doing at the first notice of danger, and takes the right practical measures. Yet the conscience he ridicules, he is made to feel —

> "there is no creature loves me;
> And if I die, no soul shall pity me."

But we must note that this is only when his will is but half awake, half paralyzed by its weight of sleep. As soon as the man is himself again, neither conscience nor care for love or pity troubles him. The weakest part of the play is the scene of the citizens' talk; and the poorness of it, and the monotony of the women's curses, have given rise to the theory that in "Richard III." Shakspere was only rewriting an old play, of which he let bits stand. But though I once thought this possible, I have since

become certain that it is not so. The wooing of Anne by Richard has stirred me, in reading it aloud, almost as much as any thing else in Shakspere. Note, too, how the first lines of the play lift you out of the mist and confusion of the "Henry VI." plays into the sun of Shakspere's genius. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere.*

This only of all Shakespeare's plays belongs absolutely to the school of Marlowe. The influence of the elder master, and that influence alone, is perceptible from end to end. Here at last we can see that Shakespeare has decidedly chosen his side. It is as fiery in passion, as single in purpose, as rhetorical often though never so inflated in expression, as "Tamburlaine" itself. It is doubtless a better piece of work than Marlowe ever did; I dare not say, that Marlowe ever could have done. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 43.

In no other play of Shakespeare's, we may surely say, is the leading character so absolutely predominant as here. He absorbs almost the whole of the interest, and it is a triumph of Shakespeare's art that he makes us, in spite of everything, follow him with sympathy. This is partly because several of his victims are so worthless that their fate seems well deserved. Anne's weakness deprives her of our sympathy, and Richard's crime loses something of its horror when we see how lightly it is forgiven by the one who ought to take it most to heart. In spite of all his iniquities, he has wit and courage on his side — a wit which sometimes rises to Mephistophelean humour, a courage which does not fail him even in

the moment of disaster, but sheds a glory over his fall which is lacking to the triumph of his coldly correct opponent. However false and hypocritical he may be towards others, he is no hypocrite to himself. He is chemically free from self-delusion, even applying to himself the most derogatory terms; and this candour in the depths of his nature appeals to us. It must be said for him, too, that threats and curses recoil from him innocuous, that neither hatred nor violence nor superior force can dash his courage. Strength of character is such a rare quality that it arouses sympathy even in a criminal. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 163.

HENRY VI., PART I

1590–92

Have certainly received what may be called a *thorough repair.* . . . I should conceive it would not be very difficult to feel one's way thro' these Plays, and distinguish every where the metal from the clay. — MORGANN, MAURICE, 1777–1827, *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff, p.* 49, *note.*

I am afraid that the defects of the play must necessarily affect my commentary; and I really cannot find one good passage to relieve the unavoidable dulness of minute criticism. — COURTENAY, THOMAS PEREGRINE, 1840, *Commentaries on the Historical Plays of Shakspeare, vol.* I, *p.* 213.

In Margaret we have a foreshadowing of Lady Macbeth finely contrasted with the meek and holy Henry, whose gentle lowliness of spirit is brought out with a prominence and beauty a good deal beyond what history alone would have suggested to the Poet; as even in the Lancastrian chronicles he appears unfitted for sovereignty, more from mere imbecility than from gentle virtues, unsuited to a station demanding "sterner stuff." Occasionally, too, as in the Cardinal's death, York's last scene, and many of Henry's speeches, appears a power of the pathetic and of the terrible, in which, however imperfectly developed, we cannot mistake the future author of "Lear" and "Macbeth." It is on that account that, while from the absence of that overflowing thought and quick-flashing fancy, which pervade the other histories, the paucity of those Shakespearian bold felicities of expression which fasten themselves upon the memory, and from the inferiority of the versification in freedom and melody, they can add nothing to the reputation of Shakespeare as a poet, they have nevertheless taken strong hold of the general mind, are familiar to all readers, and have certainly substituted their representations of the persons and incidents of the wars of York and Lancaster in popular opinion, alike to those of sober narratives of the chroniclers, and of the philosophic inferences of modern historians. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare, vol.* I.

If we separate all the scenes between York and Somerset, Mortimer and York, Margaret and Suffolk, and read them by themselves, we feel that we are looking upon a series of scenes which exhibit Shakespeare's style in his historical plays just in the manner in which we should

have expected him to have written at the commencement of his career. We see the skilful and witty turn of speech and the germ of his figurative language; we perceive already the fine clever repartees and the more choice form of expression; in Mortimer's death-scene and in the lessons of his deeply-dissembled silent policy, which while dying he transmits to York, we see, with Hallam, all the genuine feeling and knowledge of human nature which belongs to Shakespeare in similar pathetic or political scenes in his other dramas; all . . . certainly in the germ which prefigures future perfection. These scenes contrast decidedly with the trivial, tedious war scenes and the alternate bombastic and dull disputes between Gloster and Winchester; they adhere to the common highway of historical poetry, though they have sufficient of the freshness of youthful art to furnish Schiller in his "Maid of Orleans" with many beautiful traits, and indeed with the principal idea of his drama. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1845–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, p.* 116.

There is a general agreement among critics in attributing to Shakspere the scene in which the white and red roses are plucked as emblems of the rival parties in the state; perhaps the scene of the wooing of Margaret by Suffolk if not written by Shakspere was touched by him. The general spirit of the drama belongs to an older school than the Shaksperian, and it is a happiness not to have to ascribe to our greatest poet the crude and hateful handling of the character of Joan of Arc, excused though to some extent it may be by the concurrence of view in our old English chronicles. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1877, *Shakspere, (Literature Primers), p.* 63.

It is broken and choppy to an intolerable degree. The only part of it to be put down to Shakspere is the Temple Garden scene of the red and white roses; and that has nothing specially characteristic in it, though the proportion of extra-syllabled lines in it forbids us supposing it is very early work. There must be at least three hands in the play, one of whom must have written — probably, only — the rhyme scenes of Talbot and his son. But poor as this play seems to us, we have Nash's evidence that it touched Elizabethan audiences. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere, Introduction, p.* xxxviii.

The authorship of the play in hand has been a theme of argument and controversy from the days of Theobald to the present time: some boldly maintaining that Shakespeare could have had no hand in it whatever; others supposing that he merely revised and improved it, and perhaps contributed a few scenes; while yet others hold the main body of it to be his, though an inferior hand may have had some share in the composition. The reasoning of the two former classes proceeds, I believe, entirely upon internal evidence, and seems to me radically at fault in allowing far too little for the probable difference between the boyhood and the manhood of Shakespeare's genius. The argument, branching out, as it does, into numerous details, and involving many nice points of critical inquiry, is much too long for rehearsal in this place; and, even if it were not so, a statement of it would hardly pay, as it is not of a nature to interest any but those who make a special study in matters of that kind. I have endeavored to understand the question thoroughly, and am not aware of any thing that

should hinder my viewing it fairly; and I can but give it as my firm and settled judgment that the main body of the play is certainly Shakespeare's; nor do I perceive any clear and decisive reason for calling in another hand to account for any part of it. — HUDSON, HENRY NORMAN, 1880, *Harvard, ed. Shakespeare, vol.* VIII, *p.* 4.

HENRY VI., PART II

1594–5

Margaret of Anjou, as exhibited in these tragedies, is a dramatic portrait of considerable truth, and vigour, and consistency — but she is not one of Shakspeare's women. He who knew so well in what true greatness of spirit consisted — who could excite our respect and sympathy even for a Lady Macbeth, would never have given us a heroine without a touch of heroism; he would not have portrayed a high-hearted woman, struggling unsubdued against the strangest vicissitudes of fortune, meeting reverses and disasters, such as would have broken the most masculine spirit, with unshaken constancy, yet left her without a single personal quality which would excite our interest in her bravely endured misfortunes; and this too in the very face of history. He would not have given us, in lieu of the magnanimous queen, the subtle and accomplished French woman, a mere "Amazonian trull," with every coarser feature of depravity and ferocity; he would have redeemed her from unmingled detestation; he would have breathed into her some of his own sweet spirit — he would have given the woman a soul. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

I am certain that "Henry VI." is in the main not Shakespeare's, though here and there he may have put in a touch, as he undoubtedly did in "The Two Noble Kinsmen." — TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD, 1883, *Some Criticisms on Poets, Memoir by His Son, vol.* II, *p.* 290.

Ah yes! Even Shakespeare is guilty of injustice towards this noble maiden who saved her country, and he treats her in an unfriendly and unloving manner, even if he does not proclaim himself her decided enemy. And even if she saved her country with the aid of hell, she still deserves respect and admiration. Or are the critics right, who hold that those passages in which the maid makes her appearance, as also *Parts II.* and *III.* of "Henry VI." are not by Shakespeare? They maintain that he only revised this trilogy which he took from older plays. I would gladly be of their opinion for the sake of the Maid of Orleans, but their arguments are untenable. In many parts these doubtful plays bear the full impress of Shakespeare's genius. — HEINE, HEINRICH, 1838–95, *Notes on Shakespeare Heroines, tr. Benecke, p.* 84.

HENRY VI., PART III

1594–5

From mere inferiority nothing can be inferred; in the productions of wit there will be inequality. Sometimes judgment will err, and sometimes the matter itself will defeat the artist. Of every author's works one will be the best, and one will be the worst. . . . Dissimilitude of style, and heterogeneousness of sentiment, may suffi-

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ciently show that a work does not really belong to the reputed author. But in these plays no such marks of spuriousness are found. The diction, the versification, and the figures, are Shakspeare's. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

Never attracting or affecting me quite as the other works of Shakespeare, nor indeed ever seeming to me to be his works, they had never been so perused as to engage me in spontaneous interpretation or restoration. Even up to the present hour too, of Shakespeare's close, bold, and subtle reasoning; his epigrammatic play of words and ideas; his grace and dignity of dialogue; his psychological curiosity; his metaphorical prodigality; his disclosed fruits of pensive experience; his encased kernels of consolidated thought; his touches of human nature, here finely caught, there mysteriously inspired; his world-wide illustration; his magical imagery of outward things reflected from the innermost sense of them; all involved in a stream of melody whose onflow becomes in itself pathetic; — of these from the three parts of Henry the Sixth I still miss some sensible measure. — VAUGHN, HENRY HALFORD, 1880, *New Readings and New Renderings of Shakespeare's Tragedies, vol.* II, *p.* V.

KING JOHN

1595

The tragedy of "King John," though not written with the utmost power of Shakspeare, is varied with a very pleasing interchange of incidents and characters. The lady's grief is very affecting; and the character of the

bastard contains that mixture of greatness and levity which this author delighted to exhibit. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

I think its worth has been rather underrated. . . . In the order of Shakspeare's tragedies, I should place it immediately after Othello, Macbeth, Lear, Hamlet, Julius Cæsar, and Romeo and Juliet. — DAVIES, THOMAS, 1784, *Dramatic Micellanies, vol.* I, *p.* 114.

My idea of Constance is that of a lofty and proud spirit, associated with the most exquisite feelings of maternal tenderness, which is, in truth, the predominant feature of this interesting personage. The sentiments which she expresses, in the dialogue between herself, the King of France, and the Duke of Austria, at the commencement of the second act of this tragedy, very strongly evince the amiable traits of a humane disposition, and of a grateful heart. . . . The idea one naturally adopts of her qualities and appearance are, that she is noble in mind, and commanding in person and demeanour; that her countenance was capable of all the varieties of grand and tender expression, often agonized, though never distorted by the vehemence of her agitations. Her voice, too, must have been "propertied like the tuned spheres," obedient to all the softest inflections of maternal love, to all the pathos of the most exquisite sensibility, to the sudden burst of heart-rending sorrow, and to the terrifying imprecations of indignant majesty, when writhing under the miseries inflicted on her by her dastardly oppressors and treacherous allies. The actress whose lot it is to personate this great character should be richly endowed by nature for its various requirements; yet, even

when thus fortunately gifted, much, very much, remains to be effected by herself; for in the performance of the part of Constance great difficulties, both mental and physical, present themselves. — SIDDONS, SARAH, 1831? *Life of Mrs. Siddons, by Campbell, ch.* v.

That which strikes us as the principal attribute of Constance is *power* — power of imagination, of will, of passion, of affection, of pride: the moral energy, that faculty which is principally exercised in self-control, and gives consistency to the rest, is deficient; or rather, to speak more correctly, the extraordinary development of sensibility and imagination, which lends to the character its rich poetical colouring, leaves the other qualities comparatively subordinate. Hence it is that the whole complexion of the character, notwithstanding its amazing grandeur, is so exquisitely feminine. The weakness of the woman, who by the very consciousness of that weakness is worked up to desperation and defiance, the fluctuations of temper and the bursts of sublime passion, the terrors, the impatience, and the tears, are all most true to feminine nature. The energy of Constance not being based upon strength of character, rises and falls with the tide of passion. Her haughty spirit swells against resistance, and is excited into frenzy by sorrow and disappointment; while neither from her towering pride, nor her strength of intellect, can she borrow patience to submit, or fortitude to endure. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

The prevailing characteristic both of the plot and of the chief personages in the play of "King John" is that of "craft." The poet, it is true, has taken — as he found

it in the monkish record — the *historical* character of the king; but he has, with his own supreme genius, worked it out from the first scene to the last with undeviating consistency, and a revolting determination of purpose. — CLARKE, CHARLES COWDEN, 1863, *Shakespeare-Characters, p.* 319.

There is little in the play of "King John" which strengthens or gladdens the heart. In the tug of selfish power hither and thither, amidst the struggle of kingly greeds and priestly pride, amidst the sales of cities, the loveless marriage of princes, the rumors and confusion of the people, a pathetic beauty illumines the boyish figure of Arthur, so gracious, so passive, untouched by the adult rapacities and crimes of the others:

> "Good, my mother, peace!
> I would that I were low laid in my grave;
> I am not worth this coil that's made for me."

The voice of maternal passion, a woman's voice, impotent and shrill, among the unheeding male forces, goes up also from the play. There is the pity of stern armed men for the ruin of a child's life. These, and the boisterous but genuine and hearty patriotism of Faulconbridge, are the only presences of human virtue or beauty which are to be perceived in the degenerate world depicted by Shakspere. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1875–80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, p.* 153.

So long as John is the impersonator of England, of defiance to the foreigner, and opposition to the Pope, so long is he a hero. But he is bold outside only, only politically; inside, morally, he is a coward, sneak, and skunk. See how his nature comes out in the hints for

the murder of Arthur, his turning on Hubert when he thinks the murder will bring evil to himself, and his imploring Falconbridge to deny it. His death ought, of course, dramatically to have followed from some act of his in the play, as revenge for the murder of Arthur, or his plundering the abbots or abbeys, or opposing the Pope. The author of "The Troublesome Raigne," with a true instinct, made a monk murder John out of revenge for his anti-Papal patriotism. But Shakspere, unfortunately, set this story aside, though there was some warrant for it in Holinshed, and thus left a serious blot on his drama which it is impossible to remove. The character which to me stands foremost in "John" is Constance, with that most touching expression of grief for the son she had lost. Beside her cry, the tender pleading of Arthur for his life is heard, and both are backt by the rough voice of Falconbridge, who, Englishman-like, depreciates his own motives at first, but is lifted by patriotism into a gallant soldier, while his deep moral nature shows itself in his heartfelt indignation at Arthur's supposed murder. The rhetoric of the earlier historical plays is kept up in "King John," and also Shakspere's power of creating situations, which he had possesst from the first. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere.*

Almost any prose can be cut up into blank verse, but blank verse becomes the finest vehicle of thought in the language of Shakespeare and Milton. As far as I am aware, no one has noticed what great Æschylean lines there are in Shakespeare, particularly in "King John." — TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD, 1883, *Some Criticisms on Poets, Memoir by His Son, vol.* II, *p.* 289.

In this play, as in almost all the works of Shakespeare's younger years, the reader is perpetually amazed to find the finest poetical and rhetorical passages side by side with the most intolerable euphuistic affectations. And we cannot allege the excuse that these are legacies from the older play. On the contrary, there is nothing of the kind to be found in it; they are added by Shakespeare, evidently with the express purpose of displaying delicacy and profundity of thought. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 174.

MERCHANT OF VENICE

1596–98

THE | EXCELLENT | History of the Mer- | *chant of Venice.* | With the extreme cruelty of *Shylocke* | the Jew towards the said Merchant, in cut | *ting a just pound of his flesh. And the obtaining* | of *Portia* by the choyse *three Caskets.* | Written by W. SHAKESPEARE. | Printed by J. Roberts, 1600. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1600.

The Play it self, take it all together, seems to me to be one of the most finish'd of any of *Shakespear's.* The Tale indeed, in that Part relating to the Caskets, and the extravagant and unusual kind of Bond given by *Antonio,* is a little too much remov'd from the Rules of Probability: But taking the Fact for granted, we must allow it to be very beautifully written. There is something in the Friendship of *Antonio* to *Bassanio* very Great, Generous, and Tender. — ROWE, NICHOLAS, 1709, *Some Account of the Life &c., of Mr. William Shakespear, p.* xix.

With all my enthusiasm for Shakspeare, it is one of his plays that I like the least. The story of the caskets is silly, and except the character of Shylock, I see nothing beyond the attainment of a mortal: Euripides, or Racine or Voltaire, might have written all the rest. — WALPOLE, HORACE, 1788, *Letters, vol.* IX, *p.* 124.

I always consider the "Merchant of Venice" as concluding with the punishment of Shylock in the fourth Act; and a finer catastrophe does not occur in any drama, ancient or modern. The fifth act may be considered as a light afterpiece; but it is an afterpiece by Shakespear, and in his best manner. — PYE, HENRY JAMES, 1807, *Comments on the Commentators on Shakespear, p.* 77.

"The Merchant of Venice" is one of Shakspeare's most perfect works: popular to an extraordinary degree, and calculated to produce the most powerful effect on the stage, and at the same time a wonder of ingenuity and art for the reflecting critic. Shylock, the Jew, is one of the inconceivable masterpieces of characterization of which Shakspeare alone furnishes us with examples. It is easy for the poet and the player to exhibit a caricature of national sentiments, modes of speaking, and gestures. Shylock however is everything but a common Jew: he possesses a very determinate and original individuality, and yet we perceive a light touch of Judaism in everything which he says and does. We imagine we hear a sprinkling of the Jewish pronunciation in the mere written words, as we sometimes still find it in the higher classes, notwithstanding their social refinement. In tranquil situations, what is foreign to the European blood and Christian sentiments is less perceivable, but in passion

the national stamp appears more strongly marked. All these inimitable niceties the finished art of a great actor can alone properly express. — SCHLEGEL, AUGUSTUS WILLIAM, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. Black, Lecture XII.*

Portia is not a very great favourite with us; neither are we in love with her maid, Nerissa. Portia has a certain degree of affectation and pedantry about her, which is very unusual in Shakespear's women, but which perhaps was a proper qualification for the office of a "civil doctor," which she undertakes and executes so successfully. The speech about Mercy is very well; but there are a thousand finer ones in Shakespear. We do not admire the scene of the caskets: and object entirely to the Black Prince, Morocchius. We should like Jessica better if she had not deceived and robbed her father, and Lorenzo, if he had not married a Jewess, though he thinks he has a right to wrong a Jew. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 193.

Shylock is abhorred and execrated; but the skill of the poet has endued him with qualities which preserve him from contempt. His fierceness, cruelty, and relentlessness are dignified by intellectual vigour. His actions are deliberate, they are the emanations of his bold and masculine understanding. Let the art with which he negotiates his bond be contemplated; consider his coolness, his plausible exaggeration of the dangers to which Antonio's property is subjected; his bitter sarcasms and insulting gibes; all efforts of the mind to induce a belief of his indifference, and to disguise his real design: follow him into court, behold him maintaining his superiority in

argument, unmoved by insult and unawed by power, till disappointment leaves him nothing to contend for and anguish stops his speech, and then let his claims to intellectual distinction be decided on. — SKOTTOWE, AUGUSTINE, 1824, *Life of Shakspeare, vol.* I, *p.* 325.

In the management of the plot, which is sufficiently complex without the slightest confusion or incoherence, I do not conceive that it has been surpassed in the annals of any theatre. . . . The variety of characters in the "Merchant of Venice," and the powerful delineation of those upon whom the interest chiefly depends, the effectiveness of many scenes in representation, the copiousness of the wit, and the beauty of the language, it would be superfluous to extol; not is it our office to repeat a tale so often told as the praise of Shakspeare. In the language there is the commencement of a metaphysical obscurity which soon became characteristic; but it is perhaps less observable than in any later play. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–9, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol.* II, *pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 50.

When I saw this Play at Drury Lane, there stood behind me in the box a pale, fair Briton, who at the end of the Fourth Act, fell a-weeping passionately, several times exclaiming, "The poor man is wronged!" . . . When I think of those tears I have to rank "The Merchant of Venice" with the Tragedies, although the frame of the piece is decorated with the merriest figures of Masks, of Satyrs, and of Cupids, and the Poet meant the Play for a Comedy. . . . Wandering dream-hunter that I am, I looked round every where on the Rialto to see if I could not find Shylock. . . . But I found him nowhere on the

Rialto, and I determined to seek my old acquaintance in the Synagogue. The Jews were then celebrating their day of Atonement. . . . Although I looked all round the Synagogue, I nowhere discovered the face of Shylock. I saw him not. But towards evening, when, according to Jewish belief, the gates of Heaven are shut, and no prayer can then obtain admittance, I heard a voice, with a ripple of tears that were never wept by eyes. It was a sob that could come only from a breast that held in it all the martyrdom which, for eighteen centuries, had been borne by a whole tortured people. It was the death-rattle of a soul sinking down dead-tired at heaven's gates. And I seemed to know the voice, and I felt that I had heard it long ago, when, in utter despair, it moaned out, then as now, "Jessica, my child!" — HEINE, HEINRICH, 1838–56?, *Sammtliche Werke, vol.* v, *p.* 324.

One of the most popular, and, at the same time, noblest productions of our great master, unites all the charms and excellencies of Shakspeare's style. . . . But not merely does Shakspeare's wonderful skill in delineating character shine forth in this piece in the most brilliant light; the composition, arrangement, and unfolding of the intricate plot are equally wonderful. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art, pp.* 300, 301.

"The Merchant of Venice," in our opinion, was written neither to glorify friendship, nor to condemn the usurer, nor, finally to represent any moral idea, rich and manifold as are the moral allusions which the thoughtful reader carries away with him, together with the æsthetic enjoyment of this work of Art. The essential and definite

aspect of life here illustrated admonishes us that lasting success, sure, practical results can be secured only by a just estimate of things, by prudent use and calm endurance of given circumstances, equally far removed from violent resistance and cowardly concession. Strong feeling and clear, good sense holds the scales in the pervading character of the whole Drama; fortune helps the honest in so far as they boldly and wisely woo its favour; but rigid Idealism, although infinitely more amiable and estimable, shows itself as scarcely less dangerous than hard-hearted selfishness. — KREYSSIG, F., 1862, *Vorlesungen über Shakespeare, vol.* III, *p.* 381.

"The Merchant of Venice" marks the perfection of his development as a dramatist in the completeness of its stage effect, the ingenuity of its incidents, the ease of its movement, the poetic beauty of its higher passages, the reserve and self-control with which its poetry is used, the conception and development of character, and above all the mastery with which character and event are grouped round the figure of Shylock. — GREEN, JOHN RICHARD, 1874, *A Short History of the English People, ch.* vii, *sec.* vii.

I chose Shakespeare's Portia, then as now my ideal of a perfect woman, — . . . the wise, witty woman, loving with all her soul, and submitting with all her heart to a man whom everybody but herself (who was the best judge) would have judged her inferior; the laughter-loving, light-hearted, true-hearted, deep-hearted woman, full of keen perception, of active efficiency, of wisdom prompted by love, of tenderest unselfishness, of generous magnanimity; noble, simple, humble, pure; true, dutiful,

religious, and full of fun; delightful above all others, the woman of women. — KEMBLE, FRANCES ANNE, 1876, *Old Woman's Gossip, Atlantic Monthly, vol.* 37, *p.* 713.

Shylock ranks as one of the most perfect characterizations in Shakespeare. How complete in every respect! How vividly does he rise up before us! Not merely his physical appearance, but his entire spiritual nature stands forth in the plainest lineaments. In fact, we feel as if we know him better than we could possibly have done in real life. The Poet has laid open the most hidden recesses of character, has portrayed him in the most diverse relations, with a truth and fulness unapproached and unapproachable. We ask ourselves — whence this completeness, this richness, this concreteness, of characterization? If we wish to see the infinite difference upon the same subjects, compare Shylock with the best efforts of other dramatists. Take *L'Avare*, by Molière. Placed by the side of Shylock, how meager and unsatisfactory! Can we get at the ground of this extraordinary superiority? — SNIDER, DENTON JAQUES, 1877, *Systems of Shakespeare's Dramas, vol.* 1, *p.* 325.

But it is of little moment to consider how far away from Shakespeare has been the Portia of the English stage, as we gather from its annals. Rather should we try to form a clear and definite conception of her character, and of her influence upon the main incidents of the play, by a conscientious study of her in the leaves of the great master's "unvalued book." This, then, is how she pictures herself to my mind. I have always looked upon her as a perfect piece of Nature's handiwork. Her character combines all the graces of the richest woman-

hood with the strength of purpose, the wise helpfulness, and sustained power of the noblest manhood. Indeed, in this instance, Shakespeare shows us that it is the woman's keener wit and insight which see into and overcome the difficulty which has perplexed the wisest heads in Venice. For, without a doubt, as it seems to me at least, it is to her cultivated and bright intelligence, and not alone to the learned Bellario, her cousin, that Bassanio is indebted for the release of his friend Antonio. — MARTIN, LADY (HELENA FAUCIT), 1880, *On Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters, p.* 30.

The character of Shylock is one of Shakespeare's most perfect creations, even though he devotes comparatively little space to its elucidation. The conception of this figure is as grand as the perfection of art with which it appears upon the scene. The very first words he speaks are characteristic, and still more the manner in which he speaks them; and at each one of his utterances we seem to see the man before us, and we ourselves supply the gestures, the play of expression, which accompany his speech. As in his "Richard III." Shakespeare has here furnished the actor with a worthy and most grateful task. — TEN BRINK, BERNHARD, 1892–95, *Five Lectures on Shakespeare, tr. Franklin, p.* 185.

TAMING OF THE SHREW

1596–97

April 9. — To the King's house, . . . and there we saw "The Tameing of a Shrew," which hath some very good pieces in it, but generally is but a mean play; and

the best part "Sawny," done by Lacy, hath not half its life, by reason of the words, I suppose, not being understood, at least by me. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1667, *Diary and Correspondence.*

"The Taming of the Shrew" is almost the only one of Shakespear's comedies that has a regular plot, and downright moral. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 219.

In the shape in which the piece lies before us it possesses the peculiarity of appearing at once perfect and imperfect. If we confine our attention to the principal part — the spectacle as it were within the spectacle — it seems no doubt complete and finished. On the other hand, the induction is left undeveloped and incomplete. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art, p.* 294.

He has stamped upon the comedy throughout, and especially in the Induction, the indelible and unquestionable marks of his own mind, by deliberately rejecting many passages of elaborate and even splendid imagery such as no poet of that age would have been ashamed of, to substitute other passages, and even scenes, of a higher and purer poetry and sweeter melody. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

Shakspeare is quite as much at home in the sports afforded by birds of the air, as in the pursuit of beasts of chase; his knowledge of Falconry, or Hawking, so favourite a pastime with the noble and gentle of his day,

is shown by numerous passages in his plays; and probably no writer on the Noble Science ever compressed so much technical information in a narrower compass than we find in eight lines in "The Taming of the Shrew," where Petruchio rejoices over the result of his treatment of the newly-married Katharine: —

"My falcon now is sharp, and passing empty, etc."

— FRENCH, GEORGE RUSSELL, 1868, *Shakspeareana Genealogica, Appendix, p.* 572.

The critics have been very warm in praise of Shakespeare's Induction, some, however, regretting that he did not keep it up till the end of the play, others suspecting that he did so keep it up, but that the continuation has been lost. I think otherwise decidedly, being convinced that in this as in other things the Poet was wiser than his critics. For the purpose of the Induction was but to start an interest in the play; and he probably knew that such interest, once started, would be rather hindered than furthered by any coming-in of other matter; that there would be no time to think of Sly amidst such a whirlwind of oddities and whimsicalities as he was going to raise. But the regret in question well approves the goodness of the thing; for, the better the thing, the more apt men are to think they have not enough until they have too much. — HUDSON, HENRY NORMAN, 1880, *ed. Harvard Shakespeare, vol.* II, *p.* 136.

The refined instinct, artistic judgment, and consummate taste of Shakespeare were perhaps never so wonderfully shown as in his recast of another man's work — a man of real if rough genius for comedy — which we get in the "Taming of the Shrew." Only the collation

of scene with scene, then of speech with speech, then of line with line, will show how much may be borrowed from a stranger's material and how much may be added to it by the same stroke of a single hand. All the force and humour alike of character and situation belong to Shakespeare's eclipsed and forlorn precursor; he has added nothing; he has tempered and enriched everything. That the luckless author of the first sketch is like to remain a man as nameless as the deed of the witches in "Macbeth," unless some chance or caprice of accident should suddenly flash favouring light on his now impersonal and indiscoverable individuality, seems clear enough when we take into account the double and final disproof of his imaginary identity with Marlowe, which Mr. Dyce has put forward with such unanswerable certitude. He is a clumsy and coarse-fingered plagiarist from that poet, and his stolen jewels of expression look so grossly out of place in the homely setting of his usual style that they seem transmuted from real to sham. On the other hand, he is of all the Pre-Shakespeareans known to us incomparably the truest, the richest, the most powerful and original humourist; one indeed without a second on that ground, for "the rest are nowhere." — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare*, *p.* 124.

It will be seen that the element of Intrigue, of Situation, predominates in this play, and its instrumentality is Disguise. The Romanic origin and coloring are observable in the Italian names, scenery, location, manners — in its Italian form generally. But the Teutonic element of character also makes a beginning. It is, however, rude and simple; it does not show the fine and detailed portraiture which will hereafter be developed; there is a

single, dominant trait without relief. The product is unripe and uncouth in some respects, yet at the bottom the procedure is true — the retribution of the deed is the fundamental principle. The conviction and the method of the Master thus peer out in his earliest works. . . . The question whether it was written — wholly, partially, or not at all — by Shakespeare, is a matter of minor importance; the play remains exactly the same; hence a just criticism of it, as a whole, could not be changed by changing its authorship. There it stands in the book, there it belongs, and there it will remain, for it is an organic link in that series called the works of William Shakespeare. — SNIDER, DENTON JAQUES, 1887, *The Shakespearian Drama, The Comedies, pp.* 99, 100.

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1. — If the author of "The Taming of a Shrew" was not William Shakespeare, he must have been a man acquainted with Stratford-on-Avon, with Wilmecote, with the Sly family, and with the tinker himself. Is it probable that two authors should exist having a cognizance of all these facts? 2. — If the author of the older comedy was not Shakespeare, the latter must have pirated an enormous quantity of lines and scenes from some other man, a fact which would not have escaped the notice of those who were ever ready to ridicule and censure him. But there is nothing on record to prove that he was ever criticised unfavorably for his production. 3. — Burby in 1606–7 sold three plays to Ling, all of which were then recognized as Shakespeare's, and one of them was the older comedy. Burby's transactions were honorable, and he would scarcely have foisted a counterfeit production upon his buyer. 4. — If the play as it now stands was not written before 1609 and after November 19th, 1607,

all the contemporary evidence of Greene, Dekker, Henslowe, Kyd, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Rowlands must be considered as worthless; we must assign an earlier date to "Hamlet" than the one now usually received; and we must ignore the remarkable circumstance that Smethwick bought the old play in 1607, and lent the proprietors of the first Folio an improved version of it in 1622 or 1623. — FREY, ALBERT R., 1888, *Bankside Shakespeare, vol.* II, *Taming of the Shrew, Introduction, p.* 37.

He took very lightly this piece of task-work, executed, it would seem, to the order of his fellow-players. In point of diction and metre it is much less highly finished than others of his youthful comedies; but if we compare the Shakespearian play (in whose title the Shrew receives the definite instead of the indefinite article) point by point with the original, we obtain an invaluable glimpse into Shakespeare's comic, as formerly into his tragic, workshop. Few examples are so instructive as this. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 45.

HENRY IV., PART I

1596–97

The | History of | Henrie the | Fovrth; | With the battell at Shrewsburie, | *betweene the King and Lord* | Henry Percy, surnamed | Henrie Hotspur of | the North. | *With the humorous conceits of Sir* | John Falstalffe. | AT LONDON, | Printed by *P. S.* for *Andrew Wise*, dwelling | in Paules Churchyard, at the signe of | the Angell. 1598. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1598.

December 31. — In Paul's Church-yard I bought the play of "Henry the Fourth," and so went to the new Theatre and saw it acted; but my expectation being too great, it did not please me, as otherwise I believe it would; and my having a book, I believe did spoil it a little. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1660, *Diary and Correspondence.*

John Fastolfe, Knight. . . . The Stage hath been overbold with his memory, making him a Thrasonical Puff, and emblem of Mock-valour. True it is, Sir John Oldcastle did first bear the brunt of the one, being made the make-sport in all Plays for a Coward. It is easily known out of what purse this plack peny came; the Papists railing on him for a Heretick, and therefore he must also be a Coward, though indeed he was a man of arms, every inch of him, and as valiant as any in his age. Now as I am glad that Sir John Oldcastle is put out, so I am sorry that Sir John Fastolfe is put in, to relieve his memory in this base service, to be the anvil for every dull wit to strike upon. Nor is our Comedian excusable, by some alteration of his name, writing him Sir John Falstafe (and making him the property of pleasure for King Henry the Fifth, to abuse), seeing the vicinity of sounds intrench on the memory of that worthy Knight, and few do heed the inconsiderable difference in spelling of their name. — FULLER, THOMAS, 1662, *The Worthies of England, ed. Nichols, vol.* II, *p.* 131.

As to the Comical part, 'tis certainly our Author's own Invention; and the Character of Sir *John Falstaff*, is owned by Mr. *Dryden*, to be the best of Comical Characters: and the Author himself had so good an Opinion of it, that he continued it in no less than four Plays. This

part used to be play'd by Mr. *Lacy*, and never fail'd of universal applause. — LANGBAINE, GERARD, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets, p.* 456.

I cannot help thinking, there is more of contrivance and care in his execution of this play, than in almost any he has written. It is a more regular drama than his other historical plays, less charged with absurdities, and less involved in confusion. — MONTAGU, ELIZABETH, 1769, *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear, p.* 101.

He is a man at once young and old, enterprising and fat, a dupe and a wit, harmless and wicked, weak in principle and resolute by constitution, cowardly in appearance and brave in reality, a knave without malice, a liar without deceit, and a knight, a gentleman, and a soldier without either dignity, decency, or honor. This is a character which, though it may be decompounded, could not, I believe, have been formed, nor the ingredients of it duly mingled, upon any receipt whatever. It required the hand of Shakspeare himself to give to every particular part a relish of the whole, and of the whole to every particular part — alike the same incongruous, identical Falstaff, whether to the grave Chief-justice he vainly talks of his youth and offers to caper for a thousand, or cries to Mrs. Doll, "I am old!" "I am old!" although she is seated on his lap, and he is courting her for busses. — MORGANN, MAURICE, 1777–1825, *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff.*

It is confessed, by all the world, that there is an uncommon force and versatility in the mirth of Falstaff which

is superior to all that dramatic poetry has hitherto invented. — DAVIES, THOMAS, 1784, *Dramatic Micellanies, vol.* I, *p.* 237.

If Shakespear's fondness for the ludicrous sometimes led to faults in his tragedies (which was not often the case) he has made us amends by the character of Falstaff. This is perhaps the most substantial comic character that ever was invented. Sir John carries a most portly presence in the mind's eye; and in him, not to speak it profanely, "we behold the fulness of the spirit of wit and humour bodily." We are as well acquainted with his person as his mind, and his jokes come upon us with double force and relish from the quantity of flesh through which they make their way, as he shakes his fat sides with laughter, or "lards the lean earth as he walks along." Other comic characters seem, if we approach and handle them, to resolve themselves into air, "into thin air;" but this is embodied and palpable to the grossest apprehension: it lies "three fingers deep upon the ribs," it plays about the lungs and diaphragm with all the force of animal enjoyment. His body is like a good estate to his mind, from which he receives rents and revenues of profit and pleasure in kind, according to its extent and the richness of the soil. Wit is often a meagre substitute for pleasurable sensation; an effusion of spleen and petty spite at the comforts of others, from feeling none in itself. Falstaff's wit is an emanation of a fine constitution; an exuberance of good-humour and good-nature; an overflowing of his love of laughter and good-fellowship; a giving vent to his heart's ease, and overcontentment with himself and others.— HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 133.

As an historical portrait, is not only unlike the original, but misleading and unjust in essential points of character. — TYLER, JAMES ENDELL, 1838, *Henry of Monmouth, vol.* I, *p.* 356.

"Henry IV. Part 1st," may challenge the world to produce another more original and rich in characters: the whole zodiac of theatrical genius has no constellation with so many bright and fixed stars of the first magnitude as are here grouped together. — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1838, *ed. Shakspeare's Plays, Moxon ed., Life.*

Shakespeare has indeed scarcely written another play of such fulness and diversity in fascinating and sharply delineated characters, bearing at the same time such a native stamp, and interwoven with a subject so national, and so universally interesting — a play, in fact, of such manifold and powerful force of attraction. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1849–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, p.* 299.

This big pot-bellied fellow, a coward, a jester, a brawler, a drunkard, a lewd rascal, a pothouse poet, is one of Shakspeare's favourites. The reason is, that his manners are those of pure nature, and Shakspeare's mind is congenial with his own. — TAINE, H. A., 1871, *History of English Literature, tr. Van Laun, vol.* I, *bk.* ii, *ch.* iv, *p.* 323.

As to Hotspur, who can help liking him? With all his hot-headedness and petulance, his daring and his boasting, his humour with his wife, his scorn of that scented courtier, his lashing himself into a rage with

Henry the Fourth, his keenness at a bargain (North-country to a T), his hatred of music, his love of his crop-eared roan. Yet he is passion's slave, the thrall of every temper and whim. Himself and his own glory are really his gods, as at his death he says. What is his native land, what is England's weal, to him? Things to be sacrificed because his temper's crossed. One third to Wales, to England's foe, one third to himself, and but one third to Richard's rightful heir. In one sense, Hotspur is Kate the Shrew, in armour, and a man. But how he lives in the play, and starts from the printed page! — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere.*

He was a great Artist, and, as such, distinguished between the temporary and permanent, between the non-essential and essential, traits of human character. Had his intention in creating Falstaff been solely to caricature a religious sect, Falstaff would have passed away with Puritanism. He still lives, and to-day is as perfect an impersonation of wit as ever, and appeals to our sense of humor as much as he did to that of Shakespeare's contemporaries. He will ever remain the most splendid manifestation of Shakespeare's genius in the realm of Comedy. — FLEMING, WILLIAM H., 1890, *Bankside Shakespeare, vol.* XII, *The First Part of Henry the Fourth, Introduction, p.* 9.

There is no such perfect conception of the selfish sensualist in literature, and the conception is all the more perfect because of the wit that lights up the vice of Falstaff, a cold light without tenderness, for he was not a good fellow, though a merry companion. I am not sure

but I should put him beside Hamlet, and on the same level, for the merit of his artistic completeness, and at one time I much preferred him, or at least his humor. — HOWELLS, WILLIAM DEAN, 1895, *My Literary Passions, p.* 72.

HENRY IV., PART II

1597–98

THE | Second part of Henrie | the fourth, continuing to his death, | *and coronation of Henrie* | the fift. | With the humours of sir Iohn Fal- | *staffe, and swaggering* | Pistoll. | *As it hath been sundrie times publikely* | acted by the right honourable, the Lord | Chamberlaine his seruants. | *Written by William Shakespeare.*| LONDON | Printed by V. S. for Andrew Wise, and | William Aspley. | 1600. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1600.

I fancy every reader, when he ends this play, cries out with Desdemona, "O most lame and impotent conclusion!" . . . None of Shakspeare's plays are more read than the First and Second Parts of Henry the Fourth. Perhaps no author has ever in two plays afforded so much delight. The great events are interesting, for the fate of kingdoms depends upon them; the slighter occurrences are diverting, and, except one or two, sufficiently probable; the incidents are multiplied with wonderful fertility of invention, and the characters diversified with the utmost nicety of discernment, and the profoundest skill in the nature of man. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

It having been written, as the external and internal evidence concur in showing, not very long after the first part, when the author's mind was filled with the characters, story, and the spirit of that, the two together have the unity of a single drama. It is, however, inferior to its predecessor as a work of dramatic art, though, in my judgment, not at all so as a work of genius. It is not as perfect as the other as an historical tragi-comedy, as on its tragic side it has a less vivid and sustained interest, and approaches in those scenes more to the dramatized chronicle; in fact, adhering much more rigidly to historical authority, and deviating from it very little except in compressing into connected continuous actions events really separated by years. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

The character of Sir John Falstaff is, I should think, the most witty and humorous combined that ever was portrayed. So palpably is the person presented to the mind's eye, that not only do we give him a veritable location in history, but the others, the real characters in the period, compared with him, appear to be the idealised people, and invented to be his foils and contrasts. As there is no romance like the romance of real life, so no real-life character comes home to our apprehensions and credulities like the romance of Sir John Falstaff. He is one grand identity. His body is fitted for his mind — bountiful, exuberant, and luxurious; and his mind was well appointed for his body — being rich, ample, sensual, sensuous, and imaginative. The very fatness of his person is the most felicitous correspondent to the unlimited opulence of his imagination. — CLARKE, CHARLES COWDEN, 1863, *Shakespeare-Characters, p.* 431.

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

1598–99

A | Most pleasaunt and | excellent conceited Co- | medie, of Syr *John Falstaffe*, and the | merrie Wiues of *Windsor*. | Entermixed with sundrie | variable and pleasing humors of Syr *Hugh* | the Welch Knight, Iustice *Shallow*, and his | wise Cousin M. *Slender*. | With the swaggering vaine of Auncient | *Pistoll*, and Corporall *Nym*. | By *William Shakespeare* | As it hath bene diuers times Acted by the right Honorable | my Lord Chamberlaines servants Both before her | Maiestie, and elsewhere. | LONDON | Printed by T. C. for Arthur Iohnson; and are to be sold at | his shop in Powles Church-yard, at the signe of the | Flower de Leuse and the Crowne. | 1602. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1602.

But Shakespear's play in fourteen days was writ,
And in that space to make all just and fit,
Was an attempt surpassing human wit.
Yet our great Shakespear's matchless muse was such
None ever in so small time perform'd so much.

— DENNIS, JOHN, 1702, *The Comical Gallant.*

The conduct of this drama is deficient; the action begins and ends often before the conclusion, and the different parts might change places without inconvenience; but its general power, that power by which all works of genius shall finally be tried, is such, that perhaps it never yet had reader or spectator, who did not think it too soon at end. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

The "Merry Wives of Windsor" is no doubt a very amusing play, with a great deal of humour, character, and nature in it: but we should have liked it much better if any one else had been the hero of it, instead of Falstaff. We could have been contented if Shakespear had not been "commanded to show the knight in love." Wits and philosophers, for the most part, do not shine in that character; and Sir John himself by no means comes off with flying colours. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 229.

In the system of intrigued comedy, the "Merry Wives of Windsor" may be said to be almost perfect in its composition; it presents a true picture of manners; the *dénouement* is as piquant as it is well-prepared; and it is assuredly one of the merriest works in the whole comic repertory. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times, p.* 85.

"The Merry Wives of Windsor" is the work of Shakspeare in which he has best displayed English manners; for though there is something of this in the historical plays, yet we rarely see in them such a picture of actual life as comedy ought to represent. . . . In this play the English gentleman in age and youth, is brought upon the stage, slightly caricatured in Shallow, and far more so in Slender. The latter, indeed, is a perfect satire, and I think was so intended, on the brilliant youth of the provinces, such as we may believe it to have been before the introduction of newspapers and turnpike roads; awkward and boobyish among civil people, but at home in rude sports, and proud of exploits at which the town would laugh, yet perhaps with more courage and good-

nature than the laughers. No doubt can be raised that the family of Lucy is ridiculed in Shallow; but those who have recourse to the old fable of the deer-stealing, forget that Shakspeare never lost sight of his native county, and went, perhaps, every summer, to Stratford. It is not impossible that some arrogance of the provincial squires toward a player, whom, though a gentleman by birth and the recent grant of arms, they might not reckon such, excited his malicious wit to those admirable delineations. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, pt.* iii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 38.

There is a prodigal and glorious throng of incident and character in this very admirable comedy: for variety, and broad, unceasing effect, it stands perhaps unrivalled. Each individual member of the breathing group — the Wives, the Husbands, the Doctor, Parson, mine Host of the Garter, Shallow, Slender ; every character, in short, from Falstaff and his satellites to Simple and Rugby — stands out in the clearest light, and assists in reflecting the sunshine of the author's intellect for the delight and instruction of the reader or spectator. It has been said, and truly, that Falstaff, in this play, is not so unctuous and irresistible as in the two parts of "Henry IV.; " but if the Falstaff of Windsor must succumb to him of Gadshill and Shrewsbury, it should in fairness be added,

"Nought by himself can be his conqueror."

Even the gullibility of the unfortunate old boy (as drawn forth of him by the witcheries of the wicked wives) places him in an amiable point of view, and raises a new sensation in his favour. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *The Illustrated Shakespeare, vol.* II.

That Queen Bess should have desired to see Falstaff making love proves her to have been, as she was, a gross-minded old baggage. Shakespeare has evaded the difficulty with great skill. He knew that Falstaff could not be in love; and has mixed but a little, a very little, *pruritus* with his fortune-hunting courtship. But the Falstaff of "The Merry Wives" is not the Falstaff of "Henry IV." It is a big-bellied impostor, assuming his name and style, or, at best, it is Falstaff in dotage. The Mrs. Quickly of Windsor is not mine hostess of the Boar's Head; but she is a very pleasant, busy, good-natured, unprincipled old woman, whom it is impossible to be angry with. Shallow should not have left his seat in Gloucestershire and his magisterial duties. Ford's jealousy is of too serious a complexion for the rest of the play. The merry wives are a delightful pair. Methinks I see them, with their comely, middle-aged visages, their dainty white ruffs and toys, their half-witch-like conic hats, their full farthingales, their neat though not over-slim waists, their housewifely keys, their girdles, their sly laughing looks, their apple-red cheeks, their brows the lines whereon look more like the work of mirth than years. And sweet Anne Page — she is a pretty little creature whom one would like to take on one's knee. — COLERIDGE, HARTLEY, 1849–51, *Essays and Marginalia, vol.* II, *pp.* 133, 134.

Is one of those delightfully happy plays of Shakespeare, beaming with sunshine and good humour, that makes one feel the better, the lighter, and the happier, for having seen or read it. — CLARKE, CHARLES COWDEN, 1863, *Shakespeare-Characters, p.* 141.

"The Merry Wives of Windsor" is a play written expressly for the barbarian aristocrats with their hatred of ideas, their insensibility to beauty, their hard efficient manners, and their demand for impropriety. The good folk of London liked to see a prince or a duke, and they liked to see him made gracious and generous. These royal and noble persons at Windsor wished to see the interior life of country gentlemen of the middle class, and to see the women of the middle class with their excellent *bourgeois* morals, and rough, jocose ways. The comedy of hearing a French physician and a Welsh parson speak broken English was appreciated by these spectators, who uttered their mother-tongue with exemplary accent. Shakspere did not make a grievance of his task. He threw himself into it with spirit, and despatched his work quickly — in fourteen days, if we accept the tradition. But Falstaff he was not prepared to recall from heaven or from hell. He dressed up a fat rogue, brought forward for the occasion from the back premises of the poet's imagination, in Falstaff's clothes; he allowed persons and places and times to jumble themselves up as they pleased; he made it impossible for the most laborious nineteenth-century critic to patch on "The Merry Wives" to "Henry IV." But the Queen and her court laughed as the buck-basket was emptied into the ditch, no more suspecting that its gross lading was not the incomparable jester of Eastcheap than Ford suspected the woman with a great beard to be other than the veritable Dame Pratt. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1875–80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, p.* 329.

The task of presenting him so shorn of his beams, so much less than archangel (of comedy) ruined, and the

excess of (humorous) glory obscured, would hardly, we cannot but think and feel, have spontaneously suggested itself to Shakespeare as a natural or eligible aim for the fresh exercise of his comic genius. To exhibit Falstaff as throughout the whole course of five acts a credulous and baffled dupe, one "easier to be played on than a pipe," was not really to reproduce him at all. The genuine Falstaff could no more have played such a part than the genuine Petruchio could have filled such an one as was assigned him by Fletcher in the luckless hour when that misguided poet undertook to continue the subject and to correct the moral of the next comedy in our catalogue of Shakespeare's. "The Tamer Tamed" is hardly less consistent or acceptable as a sequel to the "Taming of the Shrew" than the "Merry Wives of Windsor" as a supplement to "King Henry IV.:" and no conceivable comparison could more forcibly convey how broad and deep is the gulf of incongruity which divides them. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 116.

This play supplements the two parts of "King Henry IV." by showing what Falstaff stands for; the temptation of the flesh — the world, the flesh and the devil — backed to the uttermost with good wit and good humour, that have force to mislead our youth; here brought into relation with a simple, healthy womanhood. Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford are not heroines with unexampled powers, but ordinary women, cheerful and right-minded, to whose minds Falstaff is as nothing. Quick parts, bent upon ill, fail in a wrestle with the mother-wit of plain folk who live loyally. — MORLEY, HENRY, 1893, *English Writers, vol.* X, *p.* 300.

It has failed to find favour with some, owing to a not ignoble dislike at seeing the degradation or discomfiture of Falstaff, but it must be remembered that Shakespeare, though never cruel with the morbid cruelty of the modern pessimist, is always perfectly awake to the facts of life. And, as a matter of fact, the bowls that Falstaff played involve the rubbers that are here depicted. It has also been a common saying that the play is little better than a farce. If so, it can only be said that Shakespeare very happily took or made the opportunity of showing how a farce also can pass under the species of eternity. How infinitely do the most farcical of the characters, such as Sir Hugh and Dr. Caius, excel the mere "Vices" of earlier playwrights! Who but Shakespeare had — we may almost say who but Shakespeare has — made an immortal thing of a mere ass, a mere puff-ball of foolish froth like Slender? If Chaucer had had the dramatic as he had the narrative faculty and atmosphere, he might have done Mrs. Quickly, who is a very near relative, in somewhat lower life, of the Wife of Bath, and rapidly ripening for her future experiences in Eastcheap. But Shallow is above even Chaucer, as are also the subtle differentiation between Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford, and the half-dozen strokes which her creator judged sufficient for sweet Anne Page. As for Falstaff, it is mistaken affection which thinks him degraded, or "translated" Bottom-fashion. He is even as elsewhere, though under an unluckier star. — SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature, p.* 323.

HENRY V

1599

THE | CRONICLE | History of Henry the fift, | With his battell fought at *Agin Court* in | France. Togither with *Auntient* | *Pistoll.* | *As it hath bene sundry times playd by the Right honorable* | *the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants.* | LONDON. | Printed by *Thomas Creede*, for Tho. Milling- | ton, and Iohn Busby. And are to be | sold at his house in Carter Lane, next | the Powle head. | 1600. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1600.

The popular and comic parts of the drama, although the originality of Falstaff's wit is absent, contains scenes of perfect natural gayety; and the Welshman Fluellen is a model of that serious, ingenious, inexhaustible, unexpected, and jocose military talkativeness, which excites at once our laughter and our sympathy. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times*, *p.* 321.

This drama is full of singularly beautiful detached passages: for example, the reflections of the King upon ceremony, — the description of the deaths of York and Suffolk, — the glorious speech of the King before the battle, — the chorus of the fourth act, — remarkable illustrations of Shakspere's power as a descriptive poet. Nothing can be finer, also, than the commonwealth of bees in the first act. It is full of the most exquisite imagery and music. The art employed in transforming the whole scene of the hive into a resemblance of humanity is a perfect study — every successive object, as it is brought forward, being

invested with its characteristic attribute. — KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere, bk.* iv, *ch.* iii, *p.* 185.

How popular after his old fashion, and at the same time how sublime, in his encouragement to the battle! How calm his last words to the French herald! How far is he from being over-hasty in giving credit to the victory! When he hears of the touching death of the noble York, how near is he to tears! and at the same moment, alarmed by a new tumult, how steeled to a bloody command! how impatiently furious at the last resistance! and at the moment when victory decides for him, how pious and how humble! And again, a short time after this solemn elevation of mind, he concludes his joke with Williams, careful even then that no harm should result from it. The poet has continued in the fifth act to show us to the very last the many-sided nature of the king. The terrible warrior is transformed into the merry bridegroom, the humorous vein again rises within him; yet he is not so much in love with his happiness, or so happy in his love, that in the midst of his wooing, and with all his jests and repartee, he would relax the smallest article of the peace which his policy had designed. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1849–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, p.* 346.

As the noblest glories of England are presented in this play, so it presents Shakspere's ideal of active, practical, heroic manhood. If Hamlet exhibits the dangers and weakness of the contemplative nature, and Prospero, its calm and its conquest, Henry exhibits the utmost greatness which the active nature can attain. . . . In this

play no character except Henry greatly interested Shakspere, unless it be the Welsh Fluellen, whom he loves (as Scott loved the Baron of Bradwardine) for his real simplicity underlying his apparatus of learning, and his touching faith in the theory of warfare. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1877, *Shakspere, (Literature Primers), pp.* 100, 101.

He proceeded to have a chronicle in hand to the close of his career, but he preserved for this class of work the laxity of evolution and lack of dramatic design which he had learned in his youth; and thus, side by side with plays the prodigious harmony of which Shakespeare alone could have conceived or executed, we have an epical fragment, like "Henry V.," which is less a drama by one particular poet, than a fold of the vast dramatic tapestry woven to the glory of England by the combined poetic patriotism of the Elizabethans. Is the whole of what we read here implicit Shakespeare, or did another hand combine with his to decorate this portion of the gallery? It is impossible to tell, and the reply, could it be given, would have no great critical value. "Henry V." is not "Othello." — GOSSE, EDMUND, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature, p.* 107.

"Henry V." is not one of Shakespeare's best plays, but it is one of his most amiable. He here shows himself not as the almost superhuman genius, but as the English patriot, whose enthusiasm is as beautiful as it is simple, and whose prejudices, even, are not unbecoming. The play not only points backward to the greatest period of England's past, but forward to King James, who, as the Protestant son of the Catholic Mary Stuart, was to put

an end to religious persecutions, and who, as a Scotchman and a supporter of the Irish policy of Essex, was for the first time to show the world not only a sturdy England, but a powerful Great Britain. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 243.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

1599

Much adoe about | Nothing. | *As it hath been sundrie times publickely* | acted by the right honourable, the Lord | Chamberlaine his seruants. | *Written by William Shakespeare.* | London | Printed by V. S. for Andrew Wise, and | William Aspley. | 1600. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1600.

This play is so witty, so playful, so abundant in strong writing, and rich humour, that it has always attracted universal applause. The beauties it contains are innumerable, they are a cluster, and are set so thick that they scarcely afford one another relief, and yet the best critic would find it difficult to say which of them ought to be displaced. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 80.

Perhaps that middle point of comedy was never more nicely hit in which the ludicrous blends with the tender, and our follies, turning round against themselves in support of our affections, retain nothing but their humanity. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 214.

The interest in the plot is always in fact on account of the characters, not *vice versa*, as in almost all other writers; the plot is a mere canvas and no more. Hence arises the true justification of the same stratagem being used in regard to Benedick and Beatrice, — the vanity in each being alike. Take away from the "Much Ado About Nothing" all that which is not indispensable to the plot, either as having little to do with it, or, at best, like Dogberry and his comrades, forced into the service, when any other less ingeniously absurd watchmen and night-constables would have answered the mere necessities of the action; — take away Benedick, Beatrice, Dogberry, and the reaction of the former on the character of Hero, — and what will remain? In other writers the main agent of the plot is always the prominent character; in Shakspere it is so, or is not so, as the character is in itself calculated, or not calculated, to form the plot. Don John is the main-spring of the plot of this play; but he is merely shown and then withdrawn. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 239.

Shakspeare has exhibited in Beatrice a spirited and faithful portrait of the fine lady of his own time. The deportment, language, manners, and allusions, are those of a particular class in a particular age; but the individual and dramatic character which forms the groundwork, is strongly discriminated; and being taken from general nature, belongs to every age. In Beatrice, high intellect and high animal spirits meet, and excite each other like fire and air. In her wit, (which is brilliant without being imaginative,) there is a touch of insolence, not unfrequent in women when the wit predominates over

reflection and imagination. In her temper, too, there is a slight infusion of the termagant; and her satirical humour plays with such an unrespective levity over all subjects alike, that it required a profound knowledge of women to bring such a character within the pale of our sympathy. But Beatrice, though wilful, is not wayward; she is volatile, not unfeeling. She has not only an exuberance of wit and gayety, but of heart, and soul, and energy of spirit; and is no more like the fine ladies of modern comedy, — whose wit consists in a temporary allusion, or a play upon words, and whose petulance is displayed in a toss of the head, a flirt of the fan, or a flourish of the pocket handkerchief — than one of our modern dandies is like Sir Philip Sidney. In Beatrice, Shakspeare has contrived that the poetry of the character shall not only soften, but heighten its comic effect. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

Our interest in Claudio is secured by this blending of the moral elements in his nature; but the foundation for a comedy and for a comic character does not appear to lie either in him or in the whole action in which Claudio is implicated. If we separate it from the rest, we shall retain a painful and not a cheerful impression. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1849–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, p.* 414.

If it is proverbially impossible to determine by selection the greatest work of Shakespeare, it is easy enough to decide on the date and the name of his most perfect comic masterpiece. For absolute power of composition, for faultless balance and blameless rectitude of design,

there is unquestionably no creation of his hand that will bear comparison with "Much Ado About Nothing." — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 153.

AS YOU LIKE IT

1600

Of this play the fable is wild and pleasing. I know not how the ladies will approve the facility with which both Rosiland and Celia give their hearts. To Celia much may be forgiven for the heroism of her friendship. The character of Jacques is natural and well preserved. The comic dialogue is very sprightly, with less mixture of low buffoonery than in some other plays; and the graver part is elegant and harmonious. By hastening to the end of his work, Shakspeare suppressed the dialogue between the usurper and the hermit, and lost an opportunity of exhibiting a moral lesson in which he might have found matter worthy of his highest powers. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

We make no scruple to affirm that "As You Like It" will afford considerable instruction from attentive perusal, with great addition of pleasure from adequate representation. — GENTLEMAN, FRANCIS, 1770, *Dramatic Censor, vol.* I, *p.* 478.

Shakespear has here converted the forest of Arden into another Arcadia, where they "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world." It is the most ideal of

any of this author's plays. It is a pastoral drama, in which the interest arises more out of the sentiments and characters than out of the actions or situations. It is not what is done, but what is said, that claims our attention. Nursed in solitude, "under the shade of melancholy boughs," the imagination grows soft and delicate, and the wit runs riot in idleness, like a spoiled child, that is never sent to school. Caprice and fancy reign and revel here, and stern necessity is banished to the court. The mild sentiments of humanity are strengthened with thought and leisure; the echo of the cares and noise of the world strikes upon the ear of those "who have felt them knowingly," softened by time and distance. "They hear the tumult, and are still. The very air of the place seems to breathe a spirit of philosophical poetry: to stir the thoughts, to touch the heart with pity, as the drowsy forest rustles to the sighing gale." — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakspear's Plays, p.* 214.

Rosalind is like a compound of essences, so volatile in their nature, and so exquisitely blended, that on any attempt to analyze them, they seem to escape us. To what else shall we compare her, all-enchanting as she is? — to the silvery summer clouds, which even while we gaze on them, shift their hues and forms, dissolving into air, and light, and rainbow showers? — to the May-morning, flush with opening blossoms and roseate dews, and "charm of earliest birds?" — to some wild and beautiful melody, such as some shepherd boy might "pipe to Amarillis in the shade?" — to a mountain streamlet, now smooth as a mirror in which the skies may glass themselves, and anon leaping and sparkling in the sunshine — or rather to the very sunshine itself? for

so her genial spirit touches into life and beauty whatever it shines on! — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

The sweet and sportive temper of Shakspeare, though it never deserted him, gave way to advancing years, and to the mastering force of serious thought. What he read we know but very imperfectly; yet, in the last years of this century, when five and thirty summers had ripened his genius, it seems that he must have transfused much of the wisdom of past ages into his own all-combining mind. In several of the historical plays, in the "Merchant of Venice," and especially in "As You Like It," the philosophic eye, turned inward on the mysteries of human nature, is more and more characteristic; and we might apply to the last comedy the bold figure that Coleridge has less appropriately employed as to the early poems, that "the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war-embrace." In no other play, at least, do we find the bright imagination and fascinating grace of Shakspeare's youth so mingled with the thoughtfulness of his maturer age. . . .

Few comedies of Shakspeare are more generally pleasing, and its manifold improbabilities do not much affect us in perusal. The brave, injured Orlando, the sprightly but modest Rosalind, the faithful Adam, the reflecting Jaques, the serene and magnanimous Duke, interest us by turns, though the play is not so well managed as to condense our sympathy, and direct it to the conclusion. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 51.

The poet, in conceiving this fine work, first generated a lofty ideal. His aim was to set forth the power of patience as the panacea for earth's ills and the injustice of fortune, and self-command as the condition without which the power would be inoperative. Neither this power nor its condition can be easily illustrated in the life of courts; but the sylvan life such as the banished Duke and his companions live in Arden, is favourable to both. In the contrast between the two states of life lies the charm of the play, and the reconciliation of these formal opposites is the fulfilment of its ideal. — HERAUD, JOHN A., 1865, *Shakspere, His Inner Life as Intimated in his Works, p.* 235.

"As You Like It" is a caprice. Action there is none; interest barely; likelihood still less. And the whole is charming. — TAINE, H. A., 1871, *History of English Literature, tr. Van Laun, vol.* I, *bk.* ii, *ch.* iv, *p.* 343.

Nor can it well be worth any man's while to say or to hear for the thousandth time that "As You Like It" would be one of those works which prove, as Landor said long since, the falsehood of the stale axiom that no work of man's can be perfect, were it not for that one unlucky slip of the brush which has left so ugly a little smear in one corner of the canvas as the betrothal of Oliver to Celia; though, with all reverence for a great name and a noble memory, I can hardly think that matters were much mended in George Sand's adaptation of the play by the transference of her hand to Jaques. Once elsewhere, or twice only at the most, is any such other sacrifice of moral beauty or spiritual harmony to the necessities and traditions of the stage discernible in all the world-

wide work of Shakespeare. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 151.

Thus much may suffice to show that the Poet has here borrowed a good deal of excellent matter. With what judgment and art the borrowed matter was used by him can only be understood on a careful study of his workmanship. In no one of his comedies indeed has he drawn more freely from others; nor, I may add, is there any one wherein he has enriched his drawings more liberally from the glory of his own genius. To appreciate his wisdom as shown in what he left unused, one must read the whole of Lodge's novel. In that work we find no traces of Jaques, or Touchstone, or Audrey; nothing, indeed, that could yield the slightest hint towards either of those characters. It scarce need be said that these superaddings are enough of themselves to transform the whole into another nature; pouring through all its veins a free and lively circulation of the most original wit and humour and poetry. — HUDSON, HENRY NORMAN, 1880, *ed. Harvard Shakespeare, vol.* v, *p.* 6.

Much as I have written, I feel how imperfectly I have brought out all that this delightful play has been and is to me. I can but hope that I have said enough to show why I gave my heart to Rosalind, and found an ever new delight in trying to impersonate her. — MARTIN, LADY (HELENA FAUCIT), 1884, *On Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters, p.* 355.

One of the topmost things in Shakespeare, the masterpiece of romantic comedy, one of the great type-dramas of the world. — SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature, p.* 325.

TWELFTH NIGHT

1601

At our feast wee had a play called "Twelue Night, or What you Will," much like the Commedy of Errores, or Menechmi in Plautus, but most like and neere to that in Italian called *Inganni*. A good practise in it to make the Steward beleeve his Lady widdowe was in love with him, by counterfeyting a letter as from his Lady in generall termes, telling him what shee liked best in him, and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his apparaile, &c., and then when he came to practise making him beleeue they tooke him to be mad. — MANNINGHAM, JOHN, 1601, *Diary, Feb. 2, ed. Bruce, p.* 18.

January 6. — After dinner to the Duke's house, and there saw "Twelfth-Night" acted well, though it be but a silly play, and not related at all to the name or day. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1663, *Diary and Correspondence.*

This is justly considered as one of the most delightful of Shakspear's comedies. It is full of sweetness and pleasantry. It is perhaps too good-natured for comedy. It has little satire, and no spleen. It aims at the ludicrous rather than the ridiculous. It makes us laugh at the follies of mankind, not despise them, and still less bear any ill-will towards them. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakspear's Plays, p.* 180.

We may walk into that stately hall and think, — Here Shakspere's "Twelfth Night" was acted in the Christmas

of 1601; and here its exquisite poetry first fell upon the ear of some secluded scholar, and was to him as a fragrant flower blooming amidst the arid sands of his Bracton and his Fleta; and here its gentle satire upon the vain and the foolish penetrated into the natural heart of some grave and formal dispenser of justice, and made him look with tolerance, if not with sympathy, upon the mistakes of less grave and formal fellow-men; and here its ever-gushing spirit of enjoyment, — of fun without malice, of wit without grossness, of humour without extravagance, — taught the swaggering, roaring, overgrown boy, miscalled student, that there were higher sources of mirth than affrays in Fleet Street, or drunkenness in Whitefriars. Venerable Hall of the Middle Temple, thou art to our eyes more stately and more to be admired since we looked upon that entry in the Table-book of John Manningham! The Globe has perished, and so has the Blackfriars. The works of the poet who made the names of these frail buildings immortal need no associations to recommend them; but it is yet pleasant to know that there is one locality remaining where a play of Shakspere was listened to by his contemporaries; and that play, "Twelfth Night." — KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere, bk.* vii, *ch.* ii, *p.* 311.

Is the purest and merriest comedy which Shakespeare has written. . . . And the piece in truth is constituted throughout to make a strong impression of the maddest mirth. Rightly conceived and acted by players who even in caricature do not miss the line of beauty, it has an incredible effect. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1849–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, p.* 439.

The love of Viola is the sweetest and tenderest emotion that ever informed the heart of the purest and the most graceful of beings, with a spirit almost divine. Perhaps in the whole range of Shakespeare's poetry there is nothing which comes more unbidden into the mind, and always in connexion with some image of the ethereal beauty of the utterer, than Viola's celebrated speech to the Duke in her assumed garb of the page. — CLARKE, CHARLES COWDEN, 1863, *Shakespeare-Characters*, *p.* 196.

Of all Shakespeare's Comedies, perhaps "Twelfth Night" is the most richly woven with various hues of love, serious and mock-heroic. The amorous threads take warmer shifting colours from their neighbourhood to the unmitigated remorseless merry-making of the harum-scarum old wag Sir Toby and his sparkling captain in mischief, the "most excellent devil of wit," Maria. Beside their loud conviviality and pitiless fun the languishing sentiment of the cultivated love-lorn Duke stands out seven times refined, and goes with exquisite touch to the innermost sensibilities.—MINTO, WILLIAM, 1874–85, *Characteristics of English Poets*, *p.* 298.

"Twelfth Night" is perhaps the most graceful and harmonious comedy Shakespeare ever wrote. It is certainly that in which all the notes the poet strikes, the note of seriousness and of raillery, of passion, of tenderness, and of laughter, blend in the richest and fullest concord. It is like a symphony in which no strain can be dispensed with, or like a picture veiled in a golden haze, into which all the colours resolve themselves. The play does not overflow with wit and gaiety like its predecessor; we feel that Shakespeare's joy of life has culminated and is about

to pass over into melancholy; but there is far more unity in it than in "As You Like It," and it is a great deal more dramatic. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 273.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

1601–2

I cannot reconcile my heart to Bertram; a man noble without generosity, and young without truth; who married Helen as a coward, and leaves her as a profligate; when she is dead by his unkindness, sneaks home to a second marriage, is accused by a woman whom he has wronged, defends himself by falsehood, and is dismissed to happiness. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

"All's Well That Ends Well" is one of the most pleasing of our author's comedies. The interest is however more of a serious than of a comic nature. The character of Helen is one of great sweetness and delicacy. She is placed in circumstances of the most critical kind, and has to court her husband both as a virgin and a wife: yet the most scrupulous nicety of female modesty is not once violated. There is not one thought or action that ought to bring a blush into her cheeks, or that for a moment lessens her in our esteem. Perhaps the romantic attachment of a beautiful and virtuous girl to one placed above her hopes by the circumstances of birth and fortune, was never so exquisitely expressed as in the reflections which she utters when young Rousillon leaves his mother's house, under whose protection she has been brought up with

him, to repair to the French king's court. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakspear's Plays, p.* 202.

The comic scenes, and the general graceful ease and fluency of its diction, give an air of lightness and variety to the play that are wanting in the novel. The mere story is not productive of more effect in one than in the other, and the drama makes no pretensions to rank in the first order of excellence. But a value is conferred upon Shakspeare's performance beyond its dramatic merit, by its being the repository of much sententious wisdom, and numerous passages of remarkable elegance. A single speech of the king may be referred to as an instance of both, and Helena's description of her hopeless passion may be selected as exquisitely beautiful. — SKOTTOWE, AUGUSTINE, 1824, *Life of Shakspeare, vol.* II, *p.* 142.

Helena, as a woman, is more passionate than imaginative; and, as a character, she bears the same relation to Juliet that Isabel bears to Portia. There is equal unity of purpose and effect, with much less of the glow of imagery and the external colouring of poetry in the sentiments, language and details. It is passion developed under its most profound and serious aspect; as in Isabella, we have the serious and the thoughtful, not the brilliant side of intellect. Both Helena and Isabel are distinguished by high mental powers, tinged with a melancholy sweetness; but in Isabella the serious and energetic part of the character is founded in religious principle; in Helena it is founded in deep passion. There never was, perhaps, a more beautiful picture of a woman's love, cherished in secret, not self-consuming in silent

languishment — not pining in thought — not passive and "desponding over its idol" — but patient and hopeful, strong in its own intensity, and sustained by its own fond faith. . . . All the circumstances and details with which Helena is surrounded, are shocking to our feelings and wounding to our delicacy: and yet the beauty of the character is made to triumph over all. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

This play is seldom noticed, and perhaps little understood, unless there are many like Mrs. Jameson, who has ably analysed the character of Helen. It is called one of the poet's minor plays; and as far as it has no communion with the sublimer passions, the appellation is correct; in other respects it may rank with the best. That Dr. Johnson should have passed sentence on Bertram, according to his scholastic and abstract notions of perfection, instead of charitably considering the positive imperfections of our nature, is, at least, short-sighted. — BROWN, CHARLES ARMITAGE, 1838, *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems, p.* 266.

In Helena we clearly see the outlines of one of Shakespeare's great mediatorial women, but placed in a more trying situation than any of them. They all have and must have a common trait — a deeply reconciling spirit, which can see the lesser and surrender it for the greater; they disguise, prevaricate, fib openly, circumvent parent and even the law, to reach the higher end. Formal truth of every kind they immolate for their great ethical object, which is usually the healing of some disruption in the Family; in general, they sacrifice the Moral to the Institutional. All of them do thus — Portia, Rosalind, Viola,

Imogen, down to Anne Page; we follow them with delight and applaud in them just this strength which gives them mastery over their life's problem. But when we come to Helena we call a halt, and ask, Is not that which she sacrifices a higher spiritual good than the end attained? Is the price worth the purchase, and does not meditation for once cut off its own head? — SNIDER, D. J., 1887, *The Shakespearian Drama, The Comedies, p.* 207.

HAMLET

1602–3

The | Tragicall Historie of | HAMLET | *Prince of Denmarke* | By William Shakespeare. | As it hath beene diuerse times acted by his Highnesse ser- | uants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two V- | niuersities of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where | At London printed for N. L. and John Trundell. | 1603. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1603.

It should be like the *Never-too-well read Arcadia*, where the *Prose* and *Verce* (*Matter* and *Words*) are like his *Mistresses* eyes, one still excelling another and without Corivall: or to come home to the vulgars *Element*, like *Friendly Shakespeare's Tragedies*, where the *Commedian* rides, when the *Tragedian* stands on Tip-toe: Faith it should please all, like Prince *Hamlet*. But in sadnesse, then it were to be feared he would runne mad: In sooth I will not be moone-sicke, to please: nor out of my wits though I displeased all. — SCOLOKER, ANTHONY, 1604, *Daiphantus, or the Passions of Love, Epistle to the Reader, Roxburghe Club reprint*, 1818.

September 5 (At "Serra Leona") I sent the interpreter, according to his desier, abord the Hector, whear he brooke fast, and after came abord mee, wher we gave the tragedie of Hamlett. — (Sept.) 30. Captain Hawkins dined with me, wher my companions acted Kinge Richard the Second. — 31. I envited Captain Hawkins to a ffishe dinner, and had Hamlet acted abord me: wch I *per*mitt to keepe my people from idlens and unlawfull games, or sleepe. — KEELING, CAPTAIN, 1607, *Narratives of Voyages towards the North-West in search of a Passage to Cathay and India*, 1496 *to* 1631, *ed. Rundall*, 1849, *p.* 231. *Journal of the Dragon.*

I saw "Hamlet Prince of Denmark" played, but now the old plays began to disgust this refined age, since his Majestie's being so long abroad. — EVELYN, JOHN, 1661, *Diary, Nov.* 26.

August 31. — To the Duke of York's playhouse, . . . and saw "Hamlet," which we have not seen this year before, or more; and mightily pleased with it, but above all, with Betterton, the best part, I believe, that ever man acted. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1668, *Diary and Correspondence.*

The scene represented by the Players is in wretched verse. This we may, without incurring the denomination of an ill-natured critic, venture to pronounce: that in almost every place where Shakespeare has attempted rhyme, either in the body of his plays, or at the ends of Acts or Scenes, he falls far short of the beauty and force of his blank verse. One would think they were written

by two different persons. I believe we may justly take notice that rhyme never arrived at its true beauty, never came to its perfection, in England until long since Shakespeare's time. — HANMER, SIR THOMAS, 1736, *Some Remarks on the Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, p.* 39.

If the dramas of Shakspeare were to be characterized, each by the particular excellence which distinguishes it from the rest, we must allow to the tragedy of "Hamlet" the praise of variety. The incidents are so numerous that the argument of the play would make a long tale. The scenes are interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity; with merriment, that includes judicious and instructive observations; and solemnity, not strained by poetical violence above the natural sentiments of man. New characters appear from time to time in continual succession, exhibiting various forms of life and particular modes of conversation. The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth, the mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness, and every personage produces the effect intended, from the apparition, that in the first act chills the blood with horror, to the fop in the last, that exposes affectation to just contempt. The conduct is perhaps not wholly secure against objections. The action is indeed for the most part in continual progression, but there are some scenes which neither forward nor retard it. Of the feigned madness of Hamlet there appears no adequate cause, for he does nothing which he might not have done with the reputation of sanity. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

Englishmen believe in ghosts no more than the Romans did, yet they take pleasure in the tragedy of "Hamlet," in which the ghost of a king appears on the stage. Far be it from me to justify everything in that tragedy; it is a vulgar and barbarous drama, which would not be tolerated by the vilest populace of France, or Italy. Hamlet becomes crazy in the second act, and his mistress becomes crazy in the third; the prince slays the father of his mistress under the pretence of killing a rat, and the heroine throws herself into the river; a grave is dug on the stage, and the grave-diggers talk quodlibets worthy of themselves, while holding skulls in their hands; Hamlet responds to their nasty vulgarities in sillinesses no less disgusting. In the meanwhile another of the actors conquers Poland. Hamlet, his mother, and his father-in-law carouse on the stage; songs are sung at table; there is quarreling, fighting, killing, — one would imagine this piece to be the work of a drunken savage. But amidst all these vulgar irregularities, which to this day make the English drama so absurd and so barbarous, there are to be found in "Hamlet," by a *bizarrerie* still greater, some sublime passages, worthy of the greatest genius. It seems as though nature had mingled in the brain of Shakespeare the greatest conceivable strength and grandeur with whatsoever witless vulgarity can devise that is lowest and most detestable. It must be confessed that, amid the beauties which sparkle through this horrible extravagance, the ghost of Hamlet's father has a most striking theatrical effect. It always had a great effect upon the English, — I mean upon those who are the most highly educated, and who see most clearly all the irregularity of their old drama. — VOLTAIRE, FRANÇOIS MARIE AROUET, 1768, *Theatre Complet, vol.* II, *p.* 201.

"The time is out of joint ; O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!"

In these words, I imagine, is the key to Hamlet's whole procedure, and to me it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an oak-tree planted in a costly vase, which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces. A beautiful, pure, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off; every duty is holy to him, — this too hard. The impossible is required of him, — not the impossible in itself, but the impossible to him. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts, without ever again recovering his peace of mind. . . . Hamlet is endowed more properly with sentiment than with a character; it is events alone that push him on; and accordingly the piece has somewhat the amplification of a novel. But as it is Fate that draws the plan, as the piece proceeds from a deed of terror, and the hero is steadily driven on to a deed of terror, the work is tragic in its highest sense, and admits of no other than a tragic end. — GOETHE, JOHANN WOLFGANG, 1778, *Wilhelm Meister.*

Hamlet cannot be said to have pursued his ends by very warrantable means; and if the poet, when he sacrificed him at last, meant to have enforced such a moral, it is not the worst that can be deduced from the play;

for, as Maximus, in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Valentinian," says: —

> "Although his justice were as white as truth,
> His way was crooked to it; that condemns him."

The late Dr. Akinside once observed to me, that the conduct of Hamlet was every way unnatural and indefensible, unless he were to be regarded as a young man whose intellects were in some degree impaired by his own misfortunes; by the death of his father, the loss of expected sovereignty, and a sense of shame resulting from the hasty and incestuous marriage of his mother. I have dwelt the longer on this subject because Hamlet seems to have been hitherto regarded as a hero not undeserving the pity of the audience; and because no writer on Shakspeare has taken the pains to point out the immoral tendency of his character. — STEEVENS, GEORGE, 1778, *The Plays of William Shakspeare, vol.* X.

The character is consistent. Hamlet is exhibited with good dispositions, and struggling with untoward circumstances. The contest is interesting. As he endeavours to act aright we approve and esteem him. But his original constitution renders him unequal to the contest: he displays the weaknesses and imperfections to which his peculiar character is liable; he is unfortunate; his misfortunes are in some measure occasioned by his weakness: he thus becomes an object not of blame, but of genuine and tender regret. — RICHARDSON, WILLIAM, 1783, *Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters.*

"Hamlet" was at first written by Shakespeare as a brief sketch; slowly, by degrees, it was amplified. With

what love the poet did this, the work itself shows: it contains reflections upon life, the dreams of youth, partly philosophical, partly melancholy, such as Shakespeare himself (rank and situation put out of view) may have had. Every still soul loves to look into this calm sea in which is mirrored the universe of humanity, of time and eternity. The only piece, perhaps, which the pure *sensus humanitatis* has written, and yet a tragedy of Destiny, of dark, awful Fate. — HERDER, JOHANN GOTTFRIED, 1800? *Literatur und Kunst.*

"Hamlet" is single in its kind: a tragedy of thought inspired by continual and never satisfied meditation on human destiny and the dark perplexity of the events of this world, and calculated to call forth the very same meditation in the minds of the spectators. This enigmatical work resembles those irrational equations in which a fraction of unknown magnitude always remains, that will in no manner admit of solution. Much has been said, much written on this piece, and yet no thinking man who anew expresses himself on it will, in his view of the connection and the signification of all the parts, entirely coincide with his predecessors. . . . Respecting Hamlet's character, I cannot, according to the poet's views as I understand them, pronounce altogether so favourable a sentence as Goethe's. — SCHLEGEL, AUGUSTUS WILLIAM, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. Black.*

I see no reason to think that if the play of "Hamlet" were written over again by some such writer as Banks or Lillo, retaining the process of the story, but totally omitting all the poetry of it, all the divine features of Shakespeare, his stupendous intellect; and only taking care to

give us enough of passionate dialogue, which Banks or Lillo were never at a loss to furnish; I see not how the effect could be much different upon an audience, nor how the actor has it in his power to represent Shakespeare to us differently from his representation of Banks or Lillo. — LAMB, CHARLES, 1810? *The Tragedies of Shakespeare.*

Hamlet is a name; his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What then, are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is *we* who are Hamlet. This play has a prophetic truth, which is above that of history. Whoever has become thoughtful and melancholy through his own mishaps or those of others; whoever has borne about with him the clouded brow of reflection, and thought himself "too much i' th' sun;" whoever has seen the golden lamp of day dimmed by envious mists rising in his own breast, and could find in the world before him only a dull blank with nothing left remarkable in it; whoever has known "the pangs of despised love, the insolence of office, or the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;" he who has felt his mind sink within him, and sadness cling to his heart like a malady, who has had his hopes blighted and his youth staggered by the apparitions of strange things; who cannot be well at ease, while he sees evil hovering near him like a spectre; whose powers of action have been eaten up by thought, he to whom the universe seems infinite, and himself nothing; whose bitterness of soul makes him careless of consequences, and who goes to a play as his best resource to shove off, to a second remove, the evils of life by a mock representation of them — this is the true Hamlet. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 74.

I believe the character of Hamlet may be traced to Shakspere's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy. Indeed, that this character must have some connection with the common fundamental laws of our nature may be assumed from the fact, that Hamlet has been the darling of every country in which the literature of England has been fostered. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 343.

"Hamlet" is not the finest of Shakspeare's dramas; "Macbeth," and, I think, "Othello" also, are, on the whole, superior to it: but it perhaps contains the most remarkable examples of its author's most sublime beauties, as well as of his most glaring defects. Never has he unvailed with more originality, depth, and dramatic effect the inmost state of a mighty soul; never also, has he yielded with greater unrestraint to the terrible or burlesque fancies of his imagination, and to the abundant intemperance that is characteristic of a mind without any selection, and which delights to render them striking by a strong, ingenious, and unexpected expression without caring to give them a pure and natural form. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times, p.* 174.

"Hamlet" is not the most admirable of Shakespeare's works; but Shakespeare is most admirable in "Hamlet." — BOERNE, L., 1829, *Gesammelte Schriften, Dram. Blätter, p.* 172.

Ophelia — poor Ophelia! O, far too soft, too good, too fair to be cast among the briers of this working-day

world, and fall and bleed upon the thorns of life! What shall be said of her? for eloquence is mute before her! Like a strain of sad sweet music which comes floating by us on the wings of night and silence, and which we rather feel than hear — like the exhalation of the violet dying even upon the sense it charms — like the snow-flake dissolved in air before it has caught a stain of earth — like the light surf severed from the billow, which a breath disperses — such is the character of Ophelia: so exquisitely delicate, it seems as if a touch would profane it; so sanctified in our thoughts by the last and worst of human woes, that we scarcely dare to consider it too deeply. The love of Ophelia, which she never once confesses, is like a secret which we have stolen from her, and which ought to die upon our hearts as upon her own. Her sorrows ask not words but tears; and her madness has precisely the same effect that would be produced by the spectacle of real insanity, if brought before us: we feel inclined to turn away, and veil our eyes in reverential pity and too painful sympathy. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

If Shakespeare's "Hamlet" is to be characterized in a word, it is the tragedy of the *Nothingness of Reflection*, or, as even this phrase may be varied, it is the tragedy of the Intellect. . . . Next to "Faust," "Hamlet" is the profoundest, boldest, most characteristic tragedy that has ever been written. — GANS, EDUARD, 1834, *Vermischte Schriften, vol.* II, *p.* 270.

"Hamlet," that tragedy of maniacs, this *Royal Bedlam* in which every character is either crazy or criminal, in which feigned madness is added to real madness, and in

which the grave itself furnishes the stage with the skull of a fool; in that Odeon of shadows and spectres where we hear nothing but reveries, the challenge of sentinels, the screeching of the night-bird and the roaring of the sea. — DE CHATEAUBRIAND, FRANCOIS RENÉ, VISCOMTE, 1837, *Sketches of English Literature, vol.* I, *p.* 274.

If, in all Shakspeare's pieces, it is necessary to dig deep before we can reach to the lowest foundation on which the dramatic edifice is raised, this is the case especially in the present one. Every fresh commentator who studies and writes about "Hamlet," goes deeper and further than his predecessors, and thinks he has reached to the true foundation, which, nevertheless, lies all the while still deeper and far beyond his researches. This perhaps will be the fate also of my own speculations. However, I shall not be deterred by such a prospect, but comfort myself rather with the consoling certainty it affords of the surpassing fulness and the ever freshly-springing fertility of human genius. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art, p.* 213.

Yes, Germany is Hamlet! Lo!
Upon her ramparts every night
There stalks in silence, grim and slow,
Her buried Freedom's steel-clad sprite,
Beck'ning the warders watching there,
And to the shrinking doubter saying:
"They've dropt fell poison in mine ear,
Draw thou the sword! no more delaying!"

— FREILIGRATH, FERDINAND, 1844, *April, tr. Wister.*

There is no drama, as all the world knows, upon which so much has been written as Shakespeare's "Hamlet." Quick-witted heads (Herr Rötscher's excepted) have all had their say about it. After all sorts of fashions, lofty, profound, radical, superficial, polished, crude, desultory (Herr Rötscher's lucubrations not excepted), it has been æstheticised about, romanced about, dogmatized about, be-mastered, berated, cut up, quibbled at, be-Hegeled, and be-Rötschered. A critical tower of Babel of amazing height and breadth has been reared, and for the same purpose as is in the Scripture: to scale celestial heights, and, as people see, with the same result. The celestial heights remain unscaled. A glib little sophomore (*Schulfuchs*) clambering up over the shoulders of Goethe, Gans, Tieck, and others, has reached the loftiest pinnacle of the tower, and there he is waving high in the air a school-programme with the device, "The Nothingness of Reflection," but showing only the nothingness of his own reflection; for his motto assumes that the all-powerful imagination of Shakespeare was impregnated by a miserable scholastic abstraction that has not virility enough to engender anything. — KLEIN, L., 1846, *Berliner Modenspiegel.*

No work of Shakespeare's is truly more clear in its design than this, although none, if we except the sonnets, has been so long and so entirely misunderstood. . . . The soliloquies of this "prince of speculative philosophy" are masterpieces of reflection, in which Shakespeare had recourse to the most profound depths of his wisdom; and the intricacies of his subtle thoughts mock the profundity of Scandinavian mysteries. — GERVINUS, G. G., 1849–62, *Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. Bunnètt, pp.* 550, 567.

From the rich troop of his heroes, Shakespeare has chosen Hamlet as the exponent, to the spectators and to posterity, of all that lay nearest to his own heart. It is Hamlet to whom Shakespeare has confided his confession of faith as an artist. — KREYSSIG, F., 1858, *Vorlesungen über Shakespeare, vol.* II, *p.* 235.

Two marvellous Adams, we have just said, are the man of Æschylus, Prometheus, and the man of Shakespeare, Hamlet. Prometheus is action. Hamlet is hesitation. In Prometheus, the obstacle is exterior; in Hamlet it is interior. In Prometheus, the will is securely nailed down by nails of brass and cannot get loose; besides, it has by its side two watchers, Force and Power. In Hamlet the will is more tied down yet; it is bound by previous meditation, the endless chain of the undecided. Try to get out of yourself if you can! What a Gordian knot is our reverie! Slavery from within, that is slavery indeed. Scale this enclosure, "to dream!" escape, if you can, from this prison, "to love!" the only dungeon is that which walls conscience in. Prometheus, in order to be free, has but a bronze collar to break and a god to conquer; Hamlet must break and conquer himself. Prometheus can raise himself upright, if he only lifts a mountain; to raise himself up, Hamlet must lift his own thoughts. If Prometheus plucks the vulture from his breast, all is said; Hamlet must tear Hamlet from his breast. Prometheus and Hamlet are two naked spleens; from one runs blood, from the other doubt. — HUGO, VICTOR, 1864, *William Shakespeare, tr. Baillot, p.* 195.

There would not be such a difference of opinion about this tragedy, and especially about the hero of it, were it

only borne in mind that it is a tragedy written simply for the stage. But how has the poor prince been taken to task the last ten years! He could not help it that things went all askew in Germany in 1848. "Hamlet is Germany" in a most indubitable sense, in that the German attempts at elucidating "Hamlet" are the contemporaneous history of the German mind in miniature. — HEBLER, C., 1864, *Aufstäze über Shakespeare, p.* 83.

If a dramatist wished to represent one of his persons as feigning madness, that assumed condition would be naturally desired by the writer to be as like as possible to the real affliction. If the other persons associated with him could at once discover that the madness was put on, of course the entire action would be marred, and the object for which the pretended madness would be designed would be defeated by the discovery. How consummate must be the poet's art who can have so skilfully described, to the minutest symptoms, the mental malady of a great mind as to leave it uncertain to the present day, even among learned physicians versed in such maladies, whether Hamlet's madness was real or assumed.—WISEMAN, NICHOLAS PATRICK STEPHEN, 1865, *William Shakespeare, p.* 41.

It is a curious fact that in this struggle "Hamlet," the very play the subject of which came to England from, or at least through, France, is always found in the vanguard. Whenever Shakespeare is spoken of, he is styled the author of "Hamlet," "Hamlet" being to a certain extent regarded as the embodiment not only of Shakespeare, but of the English drama in general. — ELZE, KARL, 1865, *Essays on Shakespeare, tr. Schmitz, p.* 194.

"Hamlet," which has never been fitly and perfectly played and never will be and never can be, "Hamlet" the intranslatable, "Hamlet" that twenty volumes of notes scarcely elucidate, — "Hamlet" is Shakespeare, as the "Misanthrope" is Molière. — CHASLES, PHILARÈTE, 1867, *Études Contemporaines, p.* 101.

Let us put aside altogether the idea that Hamlet, with his delays, was, in the mind of the poet, the type of the German race. In the first place, Hamlet is not German; he is a Dane, which is not the same thing; ask the Danes of the present day. — COURDAVEAUX, V., 1867, *Caractères et Talents. Études sur la Littérature Ancienne et Moderne, p.* 305.

Notwithstanding the wonderful manner in which Shakespeare has sublimated the material, the stuff of the old legend, there yet remains something of its original rudeness, and must always remain, because the fruit never can disown the soil out of which it has sprung. — BODENSTEDT, FRIEDRICH, 1870, *Introduction to Translation of Hamlet, p.* viii.

If we must draw a moral from Hamlet, it would seem to be, that Will is Fate, and that, Will once abdicating, the inevitable successor in the regency is Chance. Had Hamlet acted, instead of musing how good it would be to act, the king might have been the only victim. As it is, all the main actors in the story are the fortuitous sacrifice of his irresolution. We see how a single great vice of character at last draws to itself as allies and confederates all other weaknesses of the man, as in civil

wars the timid and the selfish wait to throw themselves upon the stronger side. — LOWELL, JAMES RUSSELL, 1868–90, *Shakespeare Once More, Prose Works. Riverside ed., vol.* III, *p.* 91.

Hamlet is Shakspeare, and, at the close of this gallery of portraits which have all some features of his own, Shakspeare has painted himself in the most striking of all. — TAINE, H. A., 1871, *History of English Literature, tr. Van Laun, vol.* I, *bk.* ii, *ch.* iv, *p.* 340.

Shakespeare carefully avoids the appearance of everything sketchy, rectilineal, hurried. The branch ramifies. The situation is hollowed out. — LUDWIG, OTTO, 1872, *Shakespeare-Studien, p.* 138.

That it is not the piece itself particularly which impresses the public is evident from the fact, that for several decades the play has been given in different places in different shapes. Every one who has undertaken to alter the piece has picked out such parts as he considered especially effective, and left out other portions. . . . The fact that a piece has admitted of so many alterations shows how very loosely it is constructed. — BENEDIX, RODERICH, 1873, *Die Shakespearomanie, p.* 289.

In no other piece has Shakespeare employed in such measure all the means of his art. The earlier acts are among the most powerful in all dramatic literature. The epic *ductus* of the last two must not be considered as a defect. We find the same mode of composition in his other dramas. — GRIMM, HERMAN, 1875, *Hamlet, Preussische Jahrbücher, April, p.* 398.

In "Hamlet" alone, the most marvellously true as it is the most marvellously profound example of Shakspere's power of characterisation, the central character is conceived on a far broader basis than is furnished by the action of the play. In reading this tragedy, or seeing it acted on the stage, the plot is forgotten in the hero. It is as if Hamlet were pausing, not before the deed which he is in reality hesitating to perform — and which is neither a great nor a difficult one — but before action in general. This one necessity proves too heavy for Hamlet to bear; the acorn — to use Goethe's simile — bursts the vessel in which it has been planted; and Hamlet succumbs beneath the fardel which is imposed on all humanity. — WARD, ADOLPHUS WILLIAM, 1875–99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature, vol.* II, *p.* 294.

Not the faintest streak of Humor appears in this tragedy to reconcile us with the drift of it. — WEISS, JOHN, 1876, *Wit, Humor, and Shakespeare, p.* 159.

No one of mortal mould (save Him "whose blessed feet were nailed for our advantage to the bitter cross") ever trod this earth, commanding such absorbing interest as this Hamlet, this mere creation of a poet's brain. No syllable that he whispers, no word let fall by any one near him, but is caught and pondered as no words ever have been, except of Holy Writ. Upon no throne built by mortal hands has ever "beat so fierce a light" as upon that airy fabric reared at Elsinore. — FURNESS, HORACE HOWARD, 1877, *ed. New Variorum Shakespeare, Hamlet, p.* xii.

Every change in the text of "Hamlet" has impaired its fitness for the stage and increased its value for the

closet in exact and perfect proportion. Now, this is not a matter of opinion — of Mr. Pope's opinion or Mr. Carlyle's; it is a matter of fact and evidence. Even in Shakespeare's time the actors threw out his additions; they throw out these very same additions in our own. The one especial speech, if any one such especial speech there be, in which the personal genius of Shakespeare soars up to the very highest of its height and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth, is passed over by modern actors; it was cut away by Hemings and Condell. We may almost assume it as certain that no boards have ever echoed — at least, more than once or twice — to the supreme soliloquy of Hamlet. Those words which combine the noblest pleading ever proffered for the rights of human reason with the loftiest vindication ever uttered of those rights, no mortal ear within our knowledge has ever heard spoken on the stage. A convocation even of all priests could not have been more unhesitatingly unanimous in its rejection than seems to have been the hereditary verdict of all actors. It could hardly have been found worthier of theological than it has been found of theatrical condemnation. Yet, beyond all question, magnificent as is that monologue on suicide and doubt which has passed from a proverb into a byword, it is actually eclipsed and distanced at once on philosophic and on poetical grounds by the later soliloquy on reason and resolution. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare*, *p.* 164.

Highly educated, possessed of a vivid imagination, his intellect is continually at war with his heart; and while the latter impels him to action, the stronger influence of his mind controls him, and he remains inert. . . . With

him it is thought that produces doubt, and the idea of Shakspere as represented in "Hamlet" seems to be "the prevalence of thought over the faculty of action." — SALVINI, TOMMASO, 1881, *Impressions of Some Shaksperean Characters, Century Magazine, vol. 23, p.* 112.

"Hamlet" is the greatest creation in literature that I know of: though there may be elsewhere finer scenes and passages of poetry. Ugolino and Paolo and Francesca in Dante equal anything anywhere. It is said that Shakespeare was such a poor actor that he never got beyond his ghost in this play, but then the ghost is the most real ghost that ever was. The Queen did not think that Ophelia committed suicide, neither do I. — TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD, 1883, *Some Criticisms on Poets, Memoir by His Son, vol.* II, *p.* 291.

"Hamlet" has given the name of Denmark a world-wide renown. Of all Danish men, there is only one who can be called famous on the largest scale; only one with whom the thoughts of men are for ever busied in Europe, America, Australia, aye, even in Asia and Africa, wherever European culture has made its way; and this one never existed, at any rate in the form in which he has become known to the world. Denmark has produced several men of note — Tycho Brahe, Thorvaldsen, and Hans Christian Andersen — but none of them has attained a hundredth part of Hamlet's fame. The "Hamlet" literature is comparable in extent to the literature of one of the smaller European peoples — the Slovaks, for instance. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *p.* 2.

"Hamlet" was the only drama by Shakespeare that was acted in his lifetime at the two Universities. It has since attracted more attention from actors, play-goers, and readers of all capacities than any other of Shakespeare's plays. Its world-wide popularity from its author's day to our own, when it is as warmly welcomed in the theatres of France and Germany as in those of England and America, is the most striking of the many testimonies to the eminence of Shakespeare's dramatic instinct. At a first glance there seems little in the play to attract the uneducated or the unreflecting. . . . It is the intensity of interest which Shakespeare contrives to excite in the character of the hero that explains the position of the play in popular esteem. The play's unrivalled power of attraction lies in the pathetic fascination exerted on minds of almost every calibre by the central figure — a high-born youth of chivalric instincts and finely developed intellect, who, when stirred to avenge in action a desperate private wrong, is foiled by introspective workings of the brain that paralyse the will. — LEE, SIDNEY, 1898, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, *pp.* 224, 225.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

1603

Of this play, the light or comic part is very natural and pleasing, but the grave scenes, if a few passages be excepted, have more labour than elegance. The plot is rather intricate than artful. The time of the action is indefinite; some time, we know not how much, must have elapsed between the recess of the duke and the

imprisonment of Claudio; for he must have learned the story of Mariana in his disguise, or he delegated his power to a man already known to be corrupted. The unities of action and place are sufficiently preserved. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

The noble virtue, the true greatness, and the feminine honour of Isabella, are every where conveyed through sentiments of responsive eloquence, and the great and commanding justice of the Duke, who learns the temper of his subjects to govern them, and who chuses for a wife the most amiable of those subjects, are dressed in language no less consonant. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 314.

Yet, notwithstanding this agitating truthfulness, how tender and mild is the pervading tone of the picture! The piece takes improperly its name from punishment; the true significance of the whole is the triumph of mercy over strict justice, no man being himself so free from errors as to be entitled to deal it out to his equals. The most beautiful embellishment of the composition is the character of Isabella . . . whose heavenly purity, amid the general corruption, is not stained with one unholy thought. In the humble robes of the novice she is a very angel of light. — SCHLEGEL, AUGUSTUS WILLIAM, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature.*

This play, which is Shakspere's throughout, is to me the most painful — say rather, the only painful — part of his genuine works. The comic and tragic parts equally border on the *μισητον*, — the one being disgusting, the

other horrible; and the pardon and marriage of Angelo not merely baffles the strong indignant claim of justice — (for cruelty, with lust and damnable baseness, cannot be forgiven, because we cannot conceive them as being morally repented of;) but it is likewise degrading to the character of woman. Beaumont and Fletcher, who can follow Shakspere in his errors only, have presented a still worse, because more loathsome and contradictory, instance of the same kind in the "Night-Walker," in the marriage of Alathe to Algripe. Of the counterbalancing beauties of "Measure for Measure," I need say nothing; for I have already remarked that the play is Shakspere's throughout. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 299.

Is perhaps, after Hamlet, Lear, and Macbeth, the play in which Shakspeare struggles, as it were, most with the over-mastering power of his own mind the depths and intricacies of being, which he has searched and sounded with intense reflection, perplex and harass him; his personages arrest their course of action to pour forth, in language the most remote from common use, thoughts which few could grasp in the clearest expression; and thus he loses something of dramatic excellence in that of his contemplative philosophy. . . . I do not value the comic parts highly: Lucio's impudent profligacy, the result rather of sensual debasement than of natural ill disposition, is well represented; but Elbow is a very inferior repetition of Dogberry. In dramatic effect, "Measure for Measure" ranks high: the two scenes between Isabella and Angelo, that between her and Claudio, those where the Duke appears in disguise, and the catastrophe in the fifth act, are admirably written and very interesting; ex-

cept so far as the spectator's knowledge of the two stratagems which have deceived Angelo may prevent him from participating in the indignation at Isabella's imaginary wrong, which her lamentations would excite. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, pt.* iii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 40.

"Measure for Measure" exhibits more clearly than any other piece the profound skill of Shakspeare, in giving intellectual depth and dramatic life to his traditional materials. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art, p.* 315.

No one of the high female characters of tragedy has been found more effective in representation than Isabella; while there is perhaps no composition of the same length in the language which has left more of its expressive phrases, its moral aphorisms, its brief sentences crowded with meaning, fixed in the general memory, and embodied by daily use in every form of popular eloquence, argument, and literature. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

In "Measure for Measure," in contrast with the flawless execution of "Romeo and Juliet," Shakespeare has spent his art in just enough modification of the scheme of the older play to make it exponent of this purpose, adapting its terrible essential incidents, so that Coleridge found it the only painful work among Shakespeare's dramas, and leaving for the reader of to-day more than the usual number of difficult expressions; but infusing a lavish colour and a profound significance into it, so that under his touch certain select portions of it rise far above the

level of all but his own best poetry, and working out of it a morality so characteristic that the play might well pass for the central expression of his moral judgments. It remains a comedy, as indeed is congruous with the bland, half-humorous equity which informs the whole composition, sinking from the heights of sorrow and terror into the rough scheme of the earlier piece; yet it is hardly less full of what is really tragic in man's existence than if Claudio had indeed "stooped to death." Even the humorous concluding scenes have traits of special grace, retaining in less emphatic passages a stray line or word of power, as it seems, so that we watch to the end for the traces where the nobler hand has glanced along, leaving its vestiges, as if accidentally or wastefully, in the rising of the style. — PATER, WALTER, 1874, *Appreciations*, *p.* 176.

Almost all that is here worthy of Shakespeare at any time is worthy of Shakespeare at his highest: and of this every touch, every line, every incident, every syllable belongs to pure and simple tragedy. The evasion of a tragic end by the invention and intromission of Mariana has deserved and received high praise for its ingenuity: but ingenious evasion of a natural and proper end is usually the distinctive quality which denotes a workman of a very much lower school than the school of Shakespeare. In short and in fact, the whole elaborate machinery by which the complete and completely unsatisfactory result of the whole plot is attained is so thoroughly worthy of such a contriver as "the old fantastical duke of dark corners" as to be in a moral sense, if I dare say what I think, very far from thoroughly worthy of the wisest and mightiest mind that ever was informed with the spirit or genius of creative poetry. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare*, *p.* 203.

He treated the subject as he did, because the interests of the theatre demanded that the woof of comedy should be interwoven with the severe and sombre warp of tragedy. But what a comedy! Dark, tragic, heavy as the poet's mood — a tragi-comedy, in which the unusually broad and realistic comic scenes, with their pictures of the dregs of society, cannot relieve the painfulness of the theme, or disguise the positively criminal nature of the action. One feels throughout, even in the comic episodes, that Shakespeare's burning wrath at the moral hypocrisy of self-righteousness underlies the whole structure like a volcano, which every moment shoots up its flames through the superficial form of comedy and the interludes of obligatory merriment. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *p.* 71.

Even in that unequal melody, "Measure for Measure," the great scene between Isabel and Claudio so far transcends anything that English, anything that European, drama had had to show for nearly two thousand years, that in this special point of view it remains perhaps the most wonderful in Shakespeare. Marlowe has nothing like it; his greatest passages, psychologically speaking, are always monologues; he cannot even attempt the clash and play of soul with soul that is so miraculously given here. — SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature, p.* 323.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

1601–3.

The many-headed multitude were drawne
By *Brutus* speech, that *Cæsar* was ambitious,
When eloquent *Mark Antonie* had showne
His vertues, who but *Brutus* then was vicious?
Mans memorie, with new, forgets the old,
One tale is good, untill another's told.

— WEEVER, JOHN, 1601, *The Mirror of Martyrs*, s.4.

So I have seene, when Cesar would appeare,
And on the Stage at halfe-sword parley were,
Brutus and *Cassius:* oh how the Audience
Were ravish'd, with what new wonder they went thence,
When some new day they would not brooke a line
Of tedious (though well laboured) *Catiline.*

— DIGGES, LEONARD, 1640, *Upon Master William Shakespeare.*

This may shew with what indignity our poet treats the noblest Romans. But there is no other cloth in his wardrobe. Every one must wear a fool's coat that comes to be dressed by him; nor is he more civil to the ladies — Portia, in good manners, might have challenged more respect; she that shines a glory of the first magnitude in the gallery of heroic dames, is with our poet scarce one remove from a natural; she is the own cousin-german of one piece, the very same impertinent silly flesh and blood with Desdemona. Shakespear's genius lay for comedy and humour. In tragedy he appears quite out of his element; his brains are turned — he raves and rambles without any coherence, any spark of reason, or any rule to controul him, to set bounds to his phrenzy. — RYMER, THOMAS, 1693, *A Short View of the Tragedy of the Last Age.*

Of this tragedy many particular passages deserve regard, and the contention and reconcilement of Brutus and Cassius is universally celebrated; but I have never been strongly agitated in perusing it, and think it somewhat cold and unaffecting, compared with some other of Shakspeare's plays; his adherence to the real story, and to Roman manners, seems to have impeded the natural vigour of his genius. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

I know no part of Shakspere that more impresses on me the belief of his genius being superhuman, than this scene between Brutus and Cassius. In the Gnostic heresy, it might have been credited with less absurdity than most of their dogmas, that the Supreme had employed him to create, previously to his function of representing, characters. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 315.

Neither has he characters of insignificance, unless the phantom that stalks over the stage as Julius Cæsar, in the play of that name, may be accounted one. — LAMB, CHARLES, 1834, *Table-Talk.*

In "Julius Cæsar" Shakspere makes a complete imaginative study of the case of a man predestined to failure. . . . Brutus is an idealist. . . . Moral ideas and principles are more to him than concrete realities; he is studious of self-perfection. . . . Cassius, on the contrary, is by no means studious of moral perfection. He is frankly envious, and hates Cæsar. . . . Julius Cæsar appears in only three scenes of the play. In the first scene of the third act he dies. Where he does appear, the poet seems anxious to insist upon the weakness

rather than the strength of Cæsar. . . . In the characters of the "Julius Cæsar" there is a severity of outline; they impose themselves with strict authority upon the imagination; subordinated to the great spirit of Cæsar, the conspirators appear as figures of life-size, but they impress us as no larger than life. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1875–80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, pp.* 249, 251, 253, 272.

The style of "Julius Cæsar" is characterized by simplicity and breadth of touch, and each sentence is clear, easy, and flowing, with the thought clothed in perfect and adequate expression: the lines are as limpid as those of "Romeo and Juliet," but without their remains of rhyme and Italian conceits. Of all Shakespeare's works, none has greater purity of verse or transparent fluency. . . . Nothing perhaps in the whole roll of dramatic poetry equals the tenderness given by Shakespeare to Brutus, that tenderness of a strong nature which the force of contrast renders so touching and so beautiful. — STAPFER, PAUL, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity, tr. Carey, pp.* 317, 342.

It is afternoon, a little before three o'clock. Whole fleets of wherries are crossing the Thames, picking their way among the swans and the other boats, to land their passengers on the south bank of the river. Skiff after skiff puts forth from the Blackfriars stair, full of theatre-goers who have delayed a little too long over their dinner and are afraid of being too late; for the flag waving over the Globe Theatre announces that there is a play to-day. The bills upon the street-posts have informed the public that Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar" is to be presented,

and the play draws a full house. People pay their sixpences and enter; the balconies and the pit are filled. Distinguished and specially favoured spectators take their seats on the stage behind the curtain. Then sound the first, the second, and the third trumpet-blasts, the curtain parts in the middle, and reveals a stage entirely hung with black. Enter the tribunes Flavius and Marullus; they scold the rabble and drive them home because they are loafing about on a week-day without their working-clothes and tools — in contravention of a London police regulation which the public finds so natural that they (and the poet) can conceive it as in force in ancient Rome. At first the audience is somewhat restless. The groundlings talk in undertones as they light their pipes. But the Second Citizen speaks the name Cæsar. There are cries of "Hush! hush!" and the progress of the play is followed with eager attention. It was received with applause, and soon became very popular. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 357.

Brutus is one of the noblest and most consistent of Shakespearian creations; a man far above all self-seeking and capable of the loftiest patriotism; in whose whole bearing, as in his deepest nature, virtue wears her noblest aspect. But Brutus is an idealist, with a touch of the doctrinaire; his purposes are of the highest, but the means he employs to give those purposes effect are utterly inadequate; in a lofty spirit he embarks on an enterprise doomed to failure by the very temper and pressure of the age. "Julius Cæsar" is the tragedy of the conflict between a great nature, denied the sense of reality, and the world-spirit. Brutus is not only crushed, but recog-

nizes that there was no other issue of his untimely endeavour. — MABIE, HAMILTON WRIGHT, 1900, *William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man, p.* 298.

OTHELLO

1604

THE | Tragœdy of Othello, | The Moore of Venice. | *As it hath beene diuerse times acted at the* | Globe, and at | Black-Friers, by | his Maiesties Seruants. | Written by VVilliam Shakespeare. | LONDON. | Printed by N. O. for *Thomas Walkley*, and are to be sold at his | shop, at the Eagle and Child, in Brittans Bursse. | 1622. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1622.

To set forth a booke without an Epistle, were like to the old English prouerbe, A blew coat without a badge, & the Author being dead, I thought good to take that piece of worke upon mee: To commend it, I will not, for that which is good, I hope euery man will commend, without intreaty: and I am the bolder, because the author's name is sufficient to vent his worke. Thus leauing euery one to the liberty of iudgement: I haue ventered to print this play, and leaue it to the generall censure. — WALKLEY, THOMAS, 1622, *The Stationer to the Reader, First Quarto ed.*

August 20. — To Deptford by water, reading "Othello, Moore of Venice," which I ever heretofore esteemed a mighty good play, but having so lately read "The Adventures of Five Houres," it seems a mean thing. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1666, *Diary and Correspondence.*

Whatever rubs or difficulty may stick on the bark, the moral use of this fable is very instructive. First, this may be a caution to all maidens of quality, how, without their parents' consent, they run away with blackamoors. Secondly, this may be a warning to all good wives, that they look well to their linen. Thirdly, this may be a lesson to husbands, that before their jealousy be tragical, the proofs may be mathematical. . . . Whence comes it then, that this is the top scene; the scene that raises "Othello" above all other tragedies at our theatres? It is purely from the *action;* from the mops and the mows, the grimace, the grins, and gesticulation. Such scenes as this have made all the world run after Harlequin and Scaramoucio. The several degrees of *action* were amongst the ancients distinguished by the cothurnus, the soccus, and the planipes. Had this scene been represented at Old Rome, Othello and Iago must have quitted their buskins; they must have played *barefoot:* for the spectators would not have been content without seeing their podometry; and the jealousy work out at the very toes of them. . . . There is in this play some burlesk, some humour, and ramble of comical wit, some shew, and some *mimicry* to divert the spectators; but the tragical part is clearly none other than a bloody farce, without salt or savour. — RYMER, THOMAS, 1693, *A Short View of the Tragedy of the Last Age.*

He whose genious has unfolded to him the knowledge of man's nature and the force of his passions; has taught him the causes by which the soul is moved to strong emotions, or calmed to rest; has enabled him not only to explain in words those emotions, but to exhibit them vividly to other eyes; thus ruling, exciting, distracting,

soothing our feelings, — this man, however little aided by the discipline of learning, is, in my judgment, a philosopher of the highest rank. In this manner, in a single dramatic fable of our own Shakespeare, the passion of jealousy, its causes, progress, incidents, and effects, have been more truly, more acutely, more copiously, and more impressively delineated than has been done by all the disquisitions of all the philosophers who have treated on this dark argument. — LOWTH, ROBERT, 1753–63, *Prælectiones de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum.*

Cassio is brave, benevolent and honest, ruined only by his want of stubbornness to resist an insidious invitation. Roderigo's suspicious credulity, and impatient submission to the cheats which he sees practiced upon him, and which by persuasion he suffers to be repeated, exhibit a strong picture of a weak mind betrayed by unlawful desires to a false friend; and the virtue of Emilia is such as we often find worn loosely, but not cast off, easy to commit small crimes, but quickened and alarmed at atrocious villanies. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1868, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

The best play upon the whole of Shakespear, and saying this it naturally follows that it is the best the world can produce. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 349.

Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear, —
The gentle Lady married to the Moor;
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.
— WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM, 1806, *Sonnet.*

Desdemona has espoused Othello; she has chosen him, as he is, out of a thousand others more worthy of her; she has left all for him; to all appearance she loves him; Iago himself does not doubt it; hardly have they received the nuptial benediction before they are separated; Othello sets out with Cassio — observe, with Cassio; Desdemona also departs for Cyprus; by accident the two parties, who had left Venice at different times arrive in Cyprus the same day, within half an hour of one another. To the knowledge and in the sight of all, Othello included, Cassio, the companion of his voyage, has not been able to speak to Desdemona more than ten minutes on the public road. And yet on the afternoon of this same day, in the midst of the first transports of a union which has been for so long a time retarded, Iago takes upon himself to persuade the amorous Othello that Desdemona, the gentle Desdemona, has betrayed him, before even she has belonged to him — that she has delivered up her heart and her person — to whom? — to Cassio, who has been able neither to see her nor to converse with her. And Iago speaks of his passion as a thing already ancient, and yet — and yet as a thing posterior to her marriage with Othello; for he represents Cassio as exclaiming,

"Cursed fate, that gave thee to the Moor!"

and Iago speaks of Cassio's intrigue with innumerable details and interminable explanations. Which is the greatest simpleton, the man who conceives such a project, or the man who allows himself to be entrapped by it? . . . The author is himself successful: but why? Because, such is the intensity and vivacity of his original conception, that the most revolting improbabilities, the most inconceivable absurdities, pass by unperceived; be-

cause no one is so ungracious, no one has the time to notice the stratagems of the drama. It is, however, another thing to offer these absurdities to be admired as merits. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times*, *pp.* 279, 280.

Othello must not be conceived as a negro, but a high and chivalrous Moorish chief. Shakspere learned the spirit of the character from the Spanish poetry, which was prevalent in England in his time. Jealousy does not strike me as the point in his passion; I take it to be rather an agony that the creature, whom he had believed angelic, with whom he had garnered up his heart, and whom he could not help still loving, should be proved impure and worthless. It was the struggle *not* to love her. It was a moral indignation and regret that virtue should so fall: — "But yet the *pity* of it, Iago! — O Iago! the *pity* of it, Iago!" In addition to this, his honour was concerned: Iago would not have succeeded but by hinting that his honour was compromised. There is no ferocity in Othello; his mind is majestic and composed. He deliberately determines to die; and speaks his last speech with a view of showing his attachment to the Venetian state, though it had superseded him. Schiller has the material Sublime; to produce an effect, he sets you a whole town on fire, and throws infants with their mothers into the flames, or locks up a father in an old tower. But Shakspere drops a handkerchief, and the same or greater effects follow. Lear is the most tremendous effort of Shakspere as a poet; Hamlet as a philosopher or meditator; and Othello is the union of the two. There is something gigantic and unformed in the former two; but in the latter, everything assumes its due place and pro-

portion, and the whole mature powers of his mind are displayed in admirable equilibrium. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1822, *Table Talk, Dec.* 29.

Nothing in poetry has ever been written more pathetic than the scene preceding Desdemona's death; I confess I almost always turn away my eyes from the poor girl with her infinitely touching song of "Willow, willow, willow," and I would fain ask the Poet whether his tragic arrow, which always hits the mark, does not here pierce almost too deeply. I would not call the last word with which she dies a lie, or even a "noble" lie; this qualification has been wretchedly misused. The lie with which Desdemona dies is divine truth, too good to come within the compass of an earthly moral code. — HORN, FRANZ, 1823, *Shakespeare's Schauspiele erlautert, vol.* II.

"Othello" is perhaps the greatest work in the world. From what does it derive its power? From the clouds? From the ocean? From the mountains? Or from love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave? — MACAULAY, THOMAS BABINGTON, 1824, *Essay on Dante.*

Emilia in this play is a perfect portrait from common life, a masterpiece in the Flemish style; and though not necessary as a contrast, it cannot be but that the thorough vulgarity, the loose principles of this plebeian woman, united to a high degree of spirit, energetic feeling, strong sense, and low cunning, serve to place in brighter relief the exquisite refinement, the moral grace, the unblemished truth, and the soft submission of Desdemona. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Shakespeare's Women.*

It would settle the dispute as to whether Shakespeare intended Othello for a jealous character, to consider how differently we are affected towards him, and for Leontes in the "Winter's Tale." Leontes *is* that character. Othello's fault was simply credulity. — LAMB, CHARLES, 1834, *Table-Talk.*

"Othello" has always appeared to me the most fearful of all Shakspeare's tragedies, but truly in the sense of the Greek — δεινστανο. My sympathies are as much repelled as attracted by it. The emotions it excites resemble those with which we regard the men who, while they irresistibly attract us by the powers and splendour of their genius, alienate us no less forcibly by their character and disposition. As often as I read it a ferment of conflicting thoughts and feelings takes possession of my mind, and it is only slowly that this deep commotion gives place to that soothing and calm elevation, which, in all the other tragedies of our author, so quickly succeeds the more painful impression. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art, p.* 183.

Were Othello but the spirited portrait of a half-tamed barbarian, we should view him as a bold and happy poetical conception, and, as such, the poet's work might satisfy our critical judgment; but it is because it depicts a noble mind, wrought by deep passion and dark devices to agonies such as every one might feel, that it awakens our strongest sympathies. We see in this drama a grand and true moral picture; we read in it a profound ethical lesson; for (to borrow the just image of the classical Lowth) while the matchless work is built up to the noblest

height of poetry, it rests upon the deepest foundations of true philosophy. — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

Now what is Othello? He is night. An immense fatal figure. Night is amorous of day. Darkness loves the dawn. The African adores the white woman. Desdemona is Othello's brightness and frenzy! And then how easy to him is jealousy! He is great, he is dignified, he is majestic, he soars above all heads, he has as an escort bravery, battle, the braying of trumpets, the banner of war, renown, glory; he is radiant with twenty victories, he is studded with stars, this Othello: but he is black. And thus how soon, when jealous, the hero becomes monster, the black becomes the negro! How speedily has night beckoned to death! By the side of Othello, who is night, there is Iago, who is evil. Evil, the other form of darkness. Night is but the night of the world; evil is the night of the soul. How deeply black are perfidy and falsehood! To have ink or treason in the veins is the same thing. Whoever has jostled against imposture and perjury knows it. One must blindly grope one's way with roguery. Pour hypocrisy upon the break of day, and you put out the sun, and this, thanks to false religions, happens to God. Iago near Othello is the precipice near the landslip. "This way!" he says in a low voice. The snare advises blindness. The being of darkness guides the black. Deceit takes upon itself to give what light may be required by night. Jealousy uses falsehood as the blind man his dog. Iago the traitor, opposed to whiteness and candour, Othello the negro, what can be more terrible! These ferocities of the darkness act in unison. These two incarnations of

the eclipse comprise together, the one roaring, the other sneering, the tragic suffocation of light. — HUGO, VICTOR, 1864, *William Shakespeare, tr. Baillot, p.* 208.

Actors do not comprehend that Shakespeare's greatest villains, Iago among them, have always a touch of conscience. You see the conscience working — therein lies one of Shakespeare's pre-eminencies. Iago ought to be acted as the "honest Iago," not the stage villain; he is the essentially jealous man, not Othello. — TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD, 1883, *Some Criticisms on Poets, Memoir by His Son, vol.* II, *p.* 292.

Thus, too, we see one of the fundamental rules of Shakespeare vindicated — that man cannot escape his own deed; hence Othello is the author of his own fate, since by his guilt he has called up the avenger who will destroy him and his family; while, without the view above developed, he must appear as an innocent sufferer deceived by a malicious villain. It will, therefore, be seen that two things of the greatest importance have their sole explanation in this view, namely, the manner of Iago's revenge, and his knowledge of the assailable point in Othello's character. Here also we find the solution of the Moor's contradictory nature. He is, in general, unsuspecting; but, on account of his guilt, he is capable of one suspicion, namely, that wives may be faithless. The poet has thus added to the distinction of race — for which the Moor could not be blamed — a second motive, the criminal deed, of which he must take the responsibility. The military life of Othello will furnish the third principle — that of honour, which will impel him to destroy the wife whom he thinks to have violated it in its

deepest and most tender part. — SNIDER, DENTON JAQUES, 1887, *The Shakespearian Drama, The Tragedies, p.* 107.

Surpasses all the others in the strength of its dramatic effects, culminating in the third act, which is indeed, dramatically, the most thrilling act in all his writings. — TEN BRINK, BERNHARD, 1892–95, *Five Lectures on Shakespeare, tr. Franklin, p.* 86.

Simple-minded critics have been of opinion that Shakespeare constructed Iago on the lines of the historic Richard III. — that is to say, found him in literature, in the pages of a chronicler. Believe me, Shakespeare met Iago in his own life, saw portions and aspects of him on every hand throughout his manhood, encountered him piecemeal, as it were, on his daily path, till one fine day, when he thoroughly felt and understood what malignant cleverness and baseness can effect, he melted down all these fragments, and out of them cast this figure. Iago — there is more of the grand manner in this figure than in the whole of "Macbeth." Iago — there is more depth, more penetrating knowledge of human nature in this one character than in the whole of "Macbeth." Iago is the very embodiment of the grand manner. He is not the principle of evil, not an old-fashioned, stupid devil; nor a Miltonic devil, who loves independence and has invented firearms; nor a Goethe's Mephistopheles, who talks cynicism, makes himself indispensable, and is generally in the right. Neither has he the magnificently foolhardy wickedness of a Cæsar Borgia, who lives his life in open defiance and reckless atrocity. Iago has no other aim than his own advantage.— BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *p.* 108.

MACBETH

1605–6

January 7. — To the Duke's house, and saw "Macbeth," which, though I saw it lately, yet appears a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertisement, though it be a deep tragedy; which is a strange perfection in a tragedy, it being most proper here, and suitable. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1666–7, *Diary and Correspondence.*

This play is deservedly celebrated for the propriety of its fictions, and solemnity, grandeur, and variety of its action, but it has no nice discriminations of character; the events are too great to admit the influence of particular dispositions, and the course of the action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents. The danger of ambition is well described; and I know not whether it may not be said, in defence of some parts which now seem improbable, that, in Shakspeare's time it was necessary to warn credulity against vain and illusive predictions. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

Macbeth wants no disguise of his natural disposition, for it is not bad; he does not affect more piety than he has: on the contrary, a part of his distress arises from a real sense of religion: which makes him regret that he could not join the chamberlains in prayer for God's blessing, and bewail that he has "given his eternal jewel to the common enemy of man." He continually reproaches himself for his deeds; no use can harden him:

confidence cannot silence, and even despair cannot stifle, the cries of his conscience. By the first murder he put "rancours in the vessel of his peace;" and of the last he owns to Macduff, "My soul is too much charg'd with blood of thine already." — WHATELY, THOMAS, 1785–1839, *Remarks on Some Characters of Shakespere, p.* 89.

Who could exhaust the praise of this sublime work? Since "The Furies" of Æschylus, nothing so grand and terrible has ever been composed. The Witches are not, it is true, divine Eumenides, and are not intended to be so: they are ignoble and vulgar instruments of hell. A German poet therefore very ill understood their meaning, when he transformed them into mongrel beings a mixture of fates, furies, and enchantresses, and clothed them with tragical dignity. Let no man lay hand on Shakspeare's works to change anything essential in them; he will be sure to punish himself. — SCHLEGEL, AUGUSTUS WILLIAM, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. Black, Lecture XII.*

Macbeth is said to have been the last King of Scotland here buried; sixty preceded him, all doubtless as powerful in their day, but now unknown — *carent quia vate sacro.* A few weeks' labour of Shakspeare, an obscure player, has done more for the memory of Macbeth than all the gifts, wealth, and monuments of this cemetery of princes have been able to secure to the rest of its inhabitants. — SCOTT, SIR WALTER, 1814, *Iona, Diary, 28th August.*

"Macbeth" (generally speaking) is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakespear's plays. It moves upon the verge of an

abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death. The action is desperate and the reaction is dreadful. It is a huddling together of fierce extremes, a war of opposite natures which of them shall destroy the other. There is nothing but what has a violent end or violent beginnings. The lights and shades are laid on with a determined hand; the transitions from triumph to despair, from the height of terror to the repose of death, are sudden and startling; every passion brings in its fellow-contrary, and the thoughts pitch and jostle against each other as in the dark. The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under our feet. Shakespear's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion. This circumstance will account for the abruptness and violent antitheses of the style, the throes and labour which run through the expression, and from defects will turn them into beauties. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, *p.* 17.

How admirably Macduff's grief is in harmony with the whole play! It rends, not dissolves, the heart. "The tune of it goes manly." Thus is Shakspere always master of himself and of his subject, — a genuine Proteus: — we see all things in him, as images in a calm lake, most distinct, most accurate — only more splendid, more glorified. This is correctness in the only philosophical sense. But he requires your sympathy and your submission; you must have that recipiency of moral impression without which the purposes and ends of the drama would be frustrated, and the absence of which demonstrates an utter want of all imagination, a deadness to that necessary pleasure of being innocently — shall I say,

deluded? — or rather, drawn away from ourselves to the music of noblest thought in harmonious sounds. Happy he, who not only in the public theatre, but in the labours of a profession, and round the light of his own hearth, still carries a heart so pleasure-fraught! — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 379.

From my boyish days I had always felt a great perplexity on one point in "Macbeth." It was this: — The knocking at the gate which succeeds to the murder of Duncan produced to my feelings an effect for which I never could account. The effect was that it reflected back upon the murder a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity; yet, however obstinately I endeavored with my understanding to comprehend this, for many years I never could see *why* it should produce such an effect. . . . At length I solved it to my own satisfaction; and my solution is this: — Murder, in ordinary cases, where the sympathy is wholly directed to the case of the murdered person, is an incident of coarse and vulgar horror; and for this reason, — that it flings the interest exclusively upon the natural but ignoble instinct by which we cleave to life: an instinct which, as being indispensable to the primal law of self-preservation, is the same in kind (though different in degree) amongst all living creatures. This instinct, therefore, because it annihilates all distinctions, and degrades the greatest of men to the level of the "poor beetle that we tread on," exhibits human nature in its most abject and humiliating attitude. Such an attitude would little suit the purposes of the poet. What then must he do? He must throw the interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with *him* (of

course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them, — not a sympathy of pity or approbation). In the murdered person, all strife of thought, all flux and reflux of passion and of purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic; the fear of instant death smites him "with its petrific mace." But in the murderer, such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion, — jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred, — which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look. — DE QUINCEY, THOMAS, 1823–60, *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth, Collected Writings, ed. Masson, vol.* X, *pp.* 385, 391.

"'Macbeth,' said Goethe, "is Shakespeare's best acting play, the one in which he shows most understanding with respect to the stage." — ECKERMANN, JOHN PETER, 1825, *Conversations of Goethe, Oct.* 15.

It was my custom to study my characters at night, when all the domestic cares and business of the day were over. On the night preceding that in which I was to appear in this part for the first time, I shut myself up, as usual, when all the family were retired, and commenced my study of Lady Macbeth. As the character is very short, I thought I should soon accomplish it. Being then only twenty years of age, I believed, as many others do believe, that little more was necessary than to get the words into my head; for the necessity of discrimination, and the development of character, at that time of my life, had scarcely entered into my imagination. But to proceed. I went on with tolerable composure, in the silence of the night (a night I can never forget), till I came

to the assassination scene, when the horrors of the scene rose to a degree that made it impossible for me to get farther. I snatched up my candle, and hurried out of the room, in a paroxysm of terror. My dress was of silk, and the rustling of it, as I ascended the stairs to go to bed, seemed to my panic-struck fancy like the movement of a spectre pursuing me. At last I reached my chamber, where I found my husband fast asleep. I clapped my candlestick down upon the table, without the power of putting the candle out; and threw myself on my bed, without daring to stay even to take off my clothes. At peep of day I rose to resume my task; but so little did I know of my part when I appeared in it at night, that my shame and confusion cured me of procrastinating my business for the remainder of my life. — SIDDONS, SARAH, 1831? *Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth, Life of Mrs. Siddons by Campbell, vol.* II, *p.* 35.

In the mind of Lady Macbeth, ambition is represented as the ruling motive, an intense overmastering passion, which is gratified at the expense of every just and generous principle, and every feminine feeling. In the pursuit of her object, she is cruel, treacherous, and daring. She is doubly, trebly dyed in guilt and blood; for the murder she instigates is rendered more frightful by disloyalty and ingratitude, and by the violation of all the most sacred claims of kindred and hospitality. When her husband's more kindly nature shrinks from the perpetration of the deed of horror, she, like an evil genius, whispers him on to his damnation. The full measure of her wickedness is never disguised, the magnitude and atrocity of her crime is never extenuated, forgotten, or forgiven, in the whole course of the play. . . . Lady Macbeth's

amazing power of intellect, her inexorable determination of purpose, her superhuman strength of nerve, render her as fearful in herself as her deeds are hateful; yet she is not a mere monster of depravity, with whom we have nothing in common, nor a meteor whose destroying path we watch in ignorant affright and amaze. She is a terrible impersonation of evil passions and mighty powers, never so far removed from our nature as to be cast beyond the pale of our sympathies; for the woman herself remains a woman to the last — still linked with her sex and with humanity. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

I regard the tragedy of "Macbeth," upon the whole, as the greatest treasure of our dramatic literature. We may look, as Britons, at Greek sculpture and at Italian paintings, with a humble consciousness that our native art has never reached their perfection; but, in the drama, we can confront Æschylus himself with Shakespeare; and of all modern theatres, *ours* alone can compete with the Greek in the unborrowed nativeness and sublimity of its superstition. In the grandeur of tragedy, "Macbeth" has no parallel, till we go back to the "Prometheus and the Furies" of the Attic stage. I could never produce, if it were not digressing too far from my subject, innumerable instances of striking similarity between the metaphorical mintage of Shakespeare's and of Æschylus's style, — a similarity, both in beauty and the fault of excess, that, unless the contrary had been proved, would lead me to suspect our great dramatist to have been a studious Greek scholar. But their resemblance arose only from the consanguinity of nature. — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1834, *Life of Mrs. Siddons, vol.* II, *p.* 6.

Kemble styles this the noblest of tragedies, and it is natural that he should prefer it to all others of Shakspeare, because, assuredly of the historical plays, and perhaps of all the plays, Othello alone excepted, it is the finest in representation. To read, I own that it is, in my opinion, inferior to some others, from the absence of the splendid and stately speeches which I have noticed in former plays. — COURTENAY, THOMAS PEREGRINE, 1840, *Commentaries on the Historical Plays of Shakspeare, vol.* II, *p.* 208.

This play has more the air of being a draft, if not unfinished, yet requiring to be retouched and written more in full by its author, than any other of his greater works. Full of incident as it is, it is still one of the shortest of the plays. Like "The Tempest" in this respect, we feel that it would be better if it were longer. We want more of the subdued and calm. There are also more passages than in other plays which seem to be carried beyond the just limits which part the true sublime from the inflated or the obscure, — passages which we may suppose to have been in the mind of Johnson when he said of the soaring genius of Shakespeare, "*sufflaminandus est.*" What might not "Macbeth" have been had the Poet been induced to sit down with the play, as it now is, before him, and to direct upon it the full force of his judgment and fine taste, removing here and there a too luxuriant expression, and giving us here and there a breadth of verdure on which the mind might find a momentary repose, and refresh itself amidst the multitude of exciting incidents which come in too rapid a succession upon us! — HUNTER, JOSEPH, 1845, *New Illustrations of the Life, Studies and Writings of Shakespeare, vol.* II, *p.* 158.

"Macbeth" seems inspired by the very genius of the tempest. This drama shows us the gathering, the discharge, and the dispelling of a domestic and political storm, which takes its peculiar hue from the individual character of the hero. It is not in the spirit of mischief that animates the "weird sisters," nor in the passionate and strong-willed ambition of Lady Macbeth, that we find the mainspring of this tragedy, but in the disproportioned though poetically tempered soul of Macbeth himself. A character like this, of extreme selfishness, with a most irritable fancy, must produce, even in ordinary circumstances, an excess of morbid apprehensiveness; which, however, as we see in him, is not inconsistent with the greatest physical courage, but generates of necessity the most entire moral cowardice. When, therefore, a man like this, ill enough qualified even for the honest and straight-forward transactions of life, had brought himself to snatch at an ambitious object by the commission of one great sanguinary crime, the new and false position in which he finds himself by his very success will but startle and exasperate him to escape, as Macbeth says, from "horrible imaginings" by the perpetration of greater and greater actual horrors, till inevitable destruction comes upon us amidst universal execration.—FLETCHER, GEORGE, 1847, *Studies of Shakespeare, p.* 109.

"Macbeth," the most awful creation of the poetic mind, is a study every way worthy of those to whom the storms of passion present the frequent cause of mental disease. — BUCKNILL, JOHN CHARLES, M.D., 1859–67, *The Mad Folk of Shakespeare, p.* 1.

It is, in fact, a powerful psychological study. Shakespeare depicts a state of mind not only novel, but highly dramatic. He has given us hardened villains, before, in his other pieces. But here he unveils the process by which the thought of crime penetrates a virtuous soul, the destruction it causes as soon as it gains lodgement there, and to what extremities it drags him who has not had strength enough to repel on its first appearance. Macbeth is not wicked like Iago, or Edmund in "Lear." He even begins well. He has defended his country and his king most zealously, and covered himself with glory on two battle-fields. His comrades in arms accord him ungrudging praise, and Duncan knows not how to recompense his deserts. But this brave soldier bears within him the germ of ambition; and, without as yet knowing the height of his aspirations, without even defining to himself his vague desires, he awakes to a simultaneous consciousness of his own power and the temptation to make trial of it. — MÉZIÈRES, A., 1860, *Shakespeare, ses Œuvres et ses Critiques.*

As regards wealth of thought, "Macbeth" ranks far below "Hamlet;" it lacks the wide, free, historic perfection which in "Julius Cæsar" raises us above the horror of his tragic fall. It cannot be compared with "Othello" for completeness, depth of plot, or full, rich illustration of character. But, in our opinion, it excels all that Shakspeare, or any other poet, has created, in the simple force of the harmonious, majestic current of its action, in the transparency of its plan, in the nervous power and bold sweep of its language, and in its prodigal wealth of poetical coloring. — KREYSSIG, F., 1862, *Vorlesungen über Shakspeare, vol.* II, *p.* 346.

It is the prospective and retrospective representation of Macbeth's remorse that constitutes the element of horror in the play. Almost as much pity is felt for the murderer as for his victim. The true title of the tragedy might be, crime, remorse, and expiation. Lady Macbeth alone appears to stand outside of the pale of morality, but her life ends before the expiatory death of her husband, whose daring villainy, incapable of plotting or of enduring the crime, is unable to submit to its punishment. All the great crimes in Shakespeare are inspired by wicked women; men may execute, but cannot conceive them. The creature of sentiment is more depraved than the man of crime. The imagination of woman dallies more easily with crime than the hand of man is raised against his victim. We feel that in committing the murder Macbeth succumbed to a strength of depravity superior to his own. This strength of depravity is the ardent imagination of his wife. . . . Such is "Macbeth!" It is Crime! It is Remorse! It is the weakness of a strong man opposed to the seductions of a perverted and passionate woman! Above all, it is the immediate expiation of crime by the secret vengeance of God! Herein lies the invincible morality of Shakespeare. The Poet is in harmony with God. — LAMARTINE, ALPHONSE MARIE LOUIS DE, 1865, *Shakespeare et son Œuvre.*

The popular misunderstanding of the character of Macbeth is due, probably, to the description his wife gives of him in the first interview we have with her. . . . "Yet do I fear thy nature," etc. But it is obvious that so far as we see Macbeth in the play, nothing could be wider of the mark than this estimate of him. . . . For nothing can be farther from the truth than the popular

view of Lady Macbeth. That wonderful characteristic of genius, which enables it to put on the character it conceives, reaches its highest manifestation in this marvellous portrait. . . . But all the truth and force of the delineation are lost when Lady Macbeth is regarded as a mere tempter and fiend. She is, in reality, nothing of the kind. Her part is simply that of a woman and a wife who shares her husband's ambition and supports him in it. So far from suggesting his crimes, she distinctly declares that he broke the enterprise to her. . . . We have seen that, before he saw his wife, Macbeth had made up his mind to this first step in his career of crime. All that she does is to back him in the execution of his own design. — CLAYDEN, P. W., 1867, *Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Fortnightly Review, vol.* 8, *pp.* 163, 164.

The history of Macbeth is the story of a moral poisoning. Frank, sociable, and generous, though tainted from the first by base and ambitious thoughts, he is urged on to his ruin by the prophetic warnings of the witches, by golden opportunity, and the instigations of his wife. He has physical but lacks moral courage. The suggestion of a possible crown haunts him. He struggles, but he is a lion in the toils. He feels the resistless traction of fate, sees himself on the verge of an abyss, and his brain is filled with phantoms. — WELSH, ALFRED H., 1882, *Development of English Literature and Language, vol.* 1, *p.* 384.

Macbeth is not, as is too often represented, a noisy swash-buckler; he is a full-furnished, ambitious man. In the scene with Duncan, the excess of courtesy adds a touch to the tragedy. It is like Clytemnestra's profusion to Agamemnon; who, by the way, always strikes me as

uncommonly cold and haughty to his wife whom he had not seen for years. — TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD, 1883, *Some Criticisms on Poets, Memoir by His Son, vol.* II, *p.* 292.

She would never have been the Lady Macbeth we see in Shakespeare's play if she had not been led to it by love for her husband, by her ambition in his interest. Her crime is not innate cruelty, but hardness of heart and unwomanly energy, though the former is even not strong enough to withhold her from tender feelings; and with a different husband she would have been a different wife. — LEO, F. A., 1885, *Shakespeare-Notes, p.* 68.

Stands alone by its grand simplicity of conception and the originality of its execution, giving us in a few bold strokes a consummate picture of the strange workings of a human soul. — TEN BRINK, BERNHARD, 1892–95, *Five Lectures on Shakespeare, tr. Franklin, p.* 87.

I confess that this play seems to me one of Shakespeare's less interesting efforts; not from the artistic, but from the purely human point of view. It is a rich, highly moral melodrama; but only at occasional points in it do I feel the beating of Shakespeare's heart. My comparative coolness of feeling towards "Macbeth" may possibly be due in a considerable degree to the shamefully mutilated form in which this tragedy has been handed down to us. Who knows what it may have been when it came from Shakespeare's own hand! The text we possess, which was not printed till long after the poet's death, is clipped, pruned, and compressed for acting purposes. We can feel distinctly where the gaps

occur, but that is of no avail. . . . Shakespeare has employed in the treatment of this subject a style that suits it — vehement to violence, compressed to congestion — figures treading upon each other's heels. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *pp.* 99, 101.

KING LEAR

1605–6

M. William Shak-speare: | HIS | True Chronicle Historie of the life | and death of King LEAR and his three | Daughters | *With the vnfortunate life of* Edgar, *sonne* | and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his | sullen and assumed humor of | Tom of Bedlam: | *As it was played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall vpon* | S. Stephans *night in Christmas Hollidayes.* | By his Maiesties seruants playing vsually at the Gloabe | on the Bancke-side. | LONDON. | Printed for *Nathaniel Butter,* and are to be sold at his shop in *Pauls* | Church-yard at the signe of the Pide Bull neere | St *Austins* Gate. 1608. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1608.

Nothing but the Power of your Perswasion, and my Zeal for all the Remains of *Shakespear,* cou'd have wrought me to so bold an Undertaking. I found that the New-modelling of this Story, wou'd force me sometimes on the difficult Task of making the chiefest Persons speak something like their Character, on Matter whereof I had no Ground in my Author. *Lear's* real and *Edgar's* pretended Madness have so much of *extravagant Nature* (I

know not how else to express it) as cou'd never have started but from our *Shakespear's* Creating Fancy. The Images and Language are so odd and surprizing, and yet so agreeable and proper, that whilst we grant that none but *Shakespear* cou'd have form'd such Conceptions; yet we are satisfied that they were the only Things in the World that ought to be said on those Occasions. — TATE, NAHUM, 1681, *The History of King Lear, Dedication.*

"King Lear" is an admirable tragedy . . . as Shakespeare wrote it; but as it is reformed according to the chimerical notion of poetical justice, in my humble opinion it has lost half its beauty. — ADDISON, JOSEPH, 1711, *The Spectator, No.* 40, *April* 16.

Lear does not run mad till the third Act; yet his behaviour towards Cordelia in the first scene has all the appearance of a judgement totally depraved. . . . Lear banishes (Cordelia) his sight, consigns her over to want, and loads her with the deepest imprecations. What less than Phrenzy can inspire a rage so groundless, and a conduct so absurd? Lear, while in his senses, acts like a madman, and from his first appearance to his last seems to be wholly deprived of his reason. — LENNOX, CHARLOTTE, 1753–4, *Shakespear Illustrated, vol.* III, *p.* 287.

Can pity be more beautifully awakened than in the sufferings of the loyal and venerable Gloster, the miseries unnaturally inflicted on the tender, credulous, choleric, but noble Lear, or the unavailing filial piety of the angelic Cordelia? Can terror be more tremendously roused than by the wickedness of Goneril and Regan, or the blind

adoption of Edmund by Gloster? Can delight be more legitimately gratified than by the conquest of struggling virtue over inordinate vice? — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 321.

We have here a plentiful crop of blunders. Kent talks, like a good Protestant, of *eating no fish;* and Gloster, of not standing in need of *spectacles.* We have *Turks, Bedlam* beggars, *child Roland, Saint Withold,* a *Marshal of France, steeples, dollars, paper, holy water,* and the *French disease.* There is an allusion to the old theatrical *moralities;* and *Nero,* who did not live till several hundred years after Lear, is mentioned by Edgar as an angler in the lake of darkness. — DOUCE, FRANCIS, 1807, *Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol.* II, *p.* 295.

Were Lear alone to suffer from his daughters, the impression would be limited to the powerful compassion felt by us for his private misfortune. But two such unheard of examples taking place at the same time have the appearance of a great commotion in the moral world: the picture becomes gigantic, and fills us with such alarm as we should entertain at the idea that the heavenly bodies might one day fall out of their regular orbits. — SCHLEGEL, AUGUSTUS WILLIAM, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. Black, Lecture XII.*

So to see Lear acted, — to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me. But the

Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear; they might more easily propose to personate the Satan of Milton upon a stage, or one of Michael Angelo's terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual: the explosions of passion are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear, — we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his reason, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodized from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. — LAMB, CHARLES, 1810? *On The Tragedies of Shakespeare.*

It is then the best of all Shakespear's plays, for it is the one in which he was the most in earnest. He was here fairly caught in the web of his own imagination. The passion which he has taken as his subject is that which strikes its root deepest into the human heart, of which the bond is the hardest to be unloosed; and the cancelling and tearing to pieces of which gives the greatest revulsion to the frame. This depth of nature, this force of passion, this tug and war of the elements of

our being, this firm faith in filial piety, and the giddy anarchy and whirling tumult of the thoughts at finding this prop failing it, the contrast between the fixed, immoveable basis of natural affection, and the rapid, irregular starts of imagination, suddenly wrenched from all its accustomed holds and resting-places in the soul, this is what Shakespear has given, and what nobody else but he could give. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 108.

Of all Shakspere's plays "Macbeth" is the most rapid, "Hamlet" the slowest, in movement. "Lear" combines length with rapidity, — like the hurricane and the whirlpool, absorbing while it advances. It begins as a stormy day in summer, with brightness; but that brightness is lurid, and anticipates the tempest. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 329.

The modern practice of blending comedy with tragedy, though liable to great abuse in point of practice, is undoubtedly an extension of the dramatic circle; but the comedy should be as in "King Lear," universal, ideal, and sublime. It is perhaps the intervention of this principle which determines the balance in favour of "King Lear" against "Œdipus Tyrannus" or the "Agamemnon," or, if you will, the trilogies with which they are connected; unless the intense power of the choral poetry, especially that of the latter, should be considered as restoring the equilibrium. "King Lear," if it can sustain this comparison, may be judged to be the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world; in spite of the narrow conditions to which the

poet was subjected by the ignorance of the philosophy of the drama which has prevailed in modern Europe. — SHELLEY, PERCY BYSSHE, 1822? *A Defence of Poetry, Works, ed. Forman, vol.* III, *p.* 114.

There is in the beauty of Cordelia's character an effect too sacred for words, and almost too deep for tears; within her heart is a fathomless well of purest affection, but its waters sleep in silence and obscurity, — never failing in their depth and never overflowing in their fulness. Every thing in her seems to lie beyond our view, and affects us in a manner which we feel rather than perceive. The character appears to have no surface, no salient points upon which the fancy can readily seize: there is little external development of intellect, less of passion, and still less of imagination. It is completely made out in the course of a few scenes, and we are surprised to find that in those few scenes there is a matter for a life of reflection, and materials enough for twenty heroines. If "Lear" be the grandest of Shakspeare's tragedies, Cordelia in herself, as a human being, governed by the purest and holiest impulses and motives, the most refined from all dross of selfishness and passion, approaches near to perfection; and in her adaptation, as a dramatic personage, to a determinate plan of action, may be pronounced altogether perfect. The character, to speak of it critically as a poetical conception, is not, however, to be comprehended at once, or easily; and in the same manner Cordelia, as a woman, is one whom we must have loved before we could have known her, and known her long before we could have known her truly. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

What "Lear" has in common with "Othello" is the soul of the Poet, dark, melancholy, deeply wounded, well-nigh shattered by the world; only here, in "Lear," still more than in "Othello," has he concentrated in his work, painted in burning colors, all the bitterness which the depravity of human nature must generate in a sensitive heart. — RAPP, MORITZ, 1843, *Shakspere's Schauspiele, Einleitung, p.* 7.

Lear's is a genuine case of insanity from the beginning to the end; such as we often see in aged persons. On reading it we cannot divest ourselves of the idea that it is a real case of insanity correctly reported. Still, we apprehend, the play, or *case*, is generally misunderstood. The general belief is, that the insanity of Lear originated solely from the ill-treatment of his daughters, while in truth he was insane before that, from the beginning of the play, when he gave his kingdom away, and banished, as it were, Cordelia and Kent, and abused his servants. The ill-usage of his daughters only aggravated the disease, and drove him to raving madness. Had it been otherwise, the case, as one of insanity, would have been inconsistent and very unusual. — BRIGHAM, A., M.D., 1844, *Shakespeare's Illustrations of Insanity, American Journal of Insanity, July.*

Goethe has pronounced the first scene absurd. More recent criticism, certainly in view of that judgment harsh, but not without reason, has defended it as unobjectionable, but yet hardly with a convincing, decisive result. . . . It appears to me that Shakespeare here, in giving motive and a dramatic form to the legend, is lacking in his usual care. This want is assuredly considerably alle-

viated by the excellent elucidations of the scenes that follow. But the satisfaction subsequently afforded to the understanding cannot be any compensation to us if the imagination has previously had just reason to be offended. — KREYSSIG, F., 1862, *Vorlesungen über Shakespeare, vol.* II, *p.* 316.

In "King Lear," with its ever-thickening gloom and deepening sorrows, we see the tragic fate which, as the world of man is constituted, too often waits on folly no less than on guilt, and involves the innocent alike with the guilty in the train of terrible consequences. — ARNOLD, THOMAS, 1862–87, *A Manual of English Literature, American ed., p.* 109.

"King Lear" is, indeed, the greatest single achievement in poetry of the Teutonic, or Northern, genius. By its largeness of conception and the variety of its details, by its revelation of a harmony existing between the forces of nature and the passions of man, by its grotesqueness and its sublimity, its own kinship with the great cathedrals of Gothic architecture. To conceive, to compass, to comprehend, at once in its stupendous unity and in its almost endless variety, a building like the cathedral of Rheims, or that of Cologne, is a feat which might seem to defy the most athletic imagination. But the impression which Shakspere's tragedy produces, while equally large — almost monstrous — and equally intricate, lacks the material fixity and determinateness of that produced by these great works in stone. Everything in the tragedy is in motion, and the motion is that of a tempest. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1875–80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, p.* 229.

"King Lear" deals especially with the natural man as opposed to the artificial man. When the King saw Edgar, then a Tom o' Bedlam, in the great storm scene, he exclaims — "Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on 's (himself, the Fool, Kent) are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself: unaccomodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come; unbutton here." And he tears his clothes off him. And this bare-stripped figure, in that awful scene, may serve as an image of the society the play represents. It is a society with all its disguises torn off. The passions walk abroad, bold and confident. Greed lifts up its head unabashed; Lust scorns all holy ties; Wrath rages like a tempest. A fearful earth, indeed, if given over to such accursed powers! But it is not so. There is also the passion of Love, and throughout the play love is performing its secret ministry. Good and evil close in a fierce struggle, as always where there is life, and not mere death; and in the end good prevails, as in the end it must prevail: for evil has not only good to encounter, but it has to fight with itself: it is essentially self-consuming. So that in this play we have presented to us humanity in its purest and simplest elements — humanity unsophisticated, denuded of all its "lendings," with its natural impulses all unchecked and potent. — HALES, JOHN W., 1875–84, *Notes and Essays on Shakespeare, p.* 252.

Cordelia is as the sun above the deeps of hell shown in Goneril and Regan. One can hardly help wishing that Shakspere had followed the old story told by Layamon

and other repeaters of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and made Cordelia set her father on the throne again, and reign after him for a while in peace. But the tragedian, the preacher of Shakspere's Third-Period lesson, did wisely for his art and meaning in letting the daughter and father lie in one grave. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere, Introduction to the Play.*

Of all Shakespeare's plays, "King Lear" is unquestionably that in which he has come nearest to the height and to the likeness of the one tragic poet on any side greater than himself whom the world in all its ages has ever seen born of time. It is by far the most Æschylean of his works; the most elemental and primæval, the most oceanic and Titanic in conception. He deals here with no subtleties as in "Hamlet," with no conventions as in "Othello:" there is no question of "a divided duty" or a problem half insoluble, a matter of country and connection, of family or of race; we look upward and downward, and in vain, into the deepest things of nature, into the highest things of providence; to the roots of life, and to the stars; from the roots that no God waters to the stars which give no man light; over a world full of death and life without resting-place or guidance. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 170.

"King Lear" cannot possibly be acted, it is too titanic. At the beginning of the play Lear, in his old age, has grown half mad, choleric and despotic, and therefore cannot brook Cordelia's silence. This play shows a state of society where men's passions are savage and uncurbed. No play like this anywhere — not even the "Agamemnon"

— is so terrifically human. — TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD, 1883 *Some Criticisms on Poets, Memoir by His Son, vol.* II, *p.* 292.

It is in "King Lear" that the poet attains the summit of his tragic powers. . . . Higher than in "Lear" Shakespeare could not rise. — TEN BRINK, BERNHARD, 1892–95, *Five Lectures on Shakespeare, tr. Franklin, p.* 87.

"Lear" is the greatest problem Shakespeare had yet proposed to himself, all the agonies and horrors of the world compressed into five short acts. The impression of "Lear" may be summed up in the words: a world-catastrophe. Shakespeare is no longer minded to depict anything else. What is echoing in his ears, what is filling his mind, is the crash of a ruining world. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 283.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

1606–7

The | Famous Historie of | Troylus *and* Cresseid. | *Excellently expressing the beginning* | of their loues, with the conceited wooing | of *Pandarus* Prince of *Licia.* | *Written by* William Shakespeare. | LONDON | Imprinted by *G. Eld* for *R. Bonian* and *H. Walley*, and | are to be sold at the spred Eagle in Paules | Church-yeard, ouer against the | great North doore, | 1609. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1609.

A NEVER WRITER TO AN EVER READER. NEWS. Eternal reader, you have here a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical; for it is a birth of your brain, that never undertook anything comical vainly; and were but the vain names of comedies changed for the titles of commodities, or of plays for pleas, you should see all those grand censors, that now style them such vanities, flock to them for the main grace of their gravities; especially this author's comedies, that are so framed to the life, that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives, showing such a dexterity and power of wit, that the most displeased with plays are pleased with his comedies. . . . Amongst all there is none more witty than this: and had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs not (for so much as will make you think your testern well bestowed), but for so much worth as even poor I know to be stuffed in it. It deserves such a labour, as well as the best comedy in Terence or Plautus. And believe this, that when he is gone, and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition. Take this for a warning, and at the peril of your pleasures' loss and judgments, refuse not, nor like this the less for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude; but thank fortune for the scape it hath made amongst you, since by the grand possessors' wills I believe you should have prayed for them rather than been prayed. And so I leave all such to be prayed for (for the states of their wit's healths) that will not praise it. Vale. — PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION, 1609.

Troy. Come, Cressida, my cresset light,
Thy face doth shine both day and night,
Behold, behold *thy garter blue*
Thy knight his valiant elbow wears,
That when he SHAKES his furious SPEARE,
The foe, in shivering fearful sort,
May lay him down in death to snort.
Cress. O knight, with valour in thy face,
Here *take my skreene,* wear it for grace;
Within they helmet put the same,
Therewith to make thy enemies lame.
— ANON, 1603, *Histriomastix.*

The Poet Æschylus was held in the same veneration by the Athenians of after Ages as Shakespear is by us; . . . though the difficulties of altering are greater, and our reverence for Shakespear much more just, than that of the Grecians for Æschylus. . . . Yet it must be allowed to the present age, that the tongue in general is so much refined since Shakespear's time, that many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole stile is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure. It is true, that in his latter plays he had worn off somewhat of the rust; but the tragedy, which I have undertaken to correct, was in all probability one of his first endeavours on the stage. . . . Shakespeare (as I hinted), in the apprenticeship of his writing, modeled it into that play, which is now called by the name of "Troilus and Cressida;" but so lamely is it left to us, that it is not divided into acts; which fault I ascribe to the actors who printed it after Shakespear's death; and that too so carelessly, that a more uncorrect copy I never saw. For the

play itself, the author seems to have begun it with some fire; the characters of Pandarus and Thersites are promising enough; but as if he grew weary of his task, after an entrance or two, he lets them fall: and the latter part of the tragedy is nothing but a confusion of drums and trumpets, excursions and alarms. The chief persons, who give name to the tragedy, are left alive: Cressida is false, and is not punished. Yet, after all, because the play was Shakespear's, and that there appeared in some places of it the admirable genius of the author, I undertook to remove that heap of rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried. — DRYDEN, JOHN, 1679, *Troilus and Cressida, Preface, Works, ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol.* VI, *pp.* 254, 255.

This play, though miserably lame in its plan, has lines in which all the genius of Shakspeare burns out. — CARY, HENRY FRANCIS, 1797, *Memoirs, vol.* I, *p.* 108.

The historical play of "Troilus and Cressida" exhibits as full a specimen of the different styles in which this wonderful writer was qualified to excel, as is to be found in any of his works. . . . The great beauty of this play, as it is of all the genuine writings of Shakespear, beyond all didactic morality, beyond all mere flights of fancy, and beyond all sublime, a beauty entirely his own, and in which no writer ancient or modern can enter into competition with him, is that his men are men; his sentiments are living, and his characters marked with those delicate, evanescent, undefinable touches which identify them with the great delineations of nature. . . . The whole catalogue of the *dramatis personæ* in the play of "Troilus

and Cressida," so far as they depend upon a rich and original vein of humour in the author, are drawn with a felicity which never was surpassed. The genius of Homer has been a topic of admiration to almost every generation of men since the period in which he wrote. But his characters will not bear the slightest comparison with the delineation of the same characters as they stand in Shakespeare. — GODWIN, WILLIAM, 1803, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, vol.* I, *pp.* 503, 505, 509.

Hector quotes *Aristotle;* Ulysses speaks of the bull-bearing *Milo,* and Pandarus of a man born in *April. Friday* and *Sunday* and even *minced-pies* with dates in them are introduced. — DOUCE, FRANCIS, 1807, *Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol.* II, *p.* 291.

This is one of the most loose and desultory of our author's plays: it rambles on just as it happens, but it overtakes, together with some indifferent matter, a prodigious number of fine things in its way. Troilus himself is no character: he is merely a common lover: but Cressida and her uncle Pandarus are hit off with proverbial truth. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays.*

There is no one of Shakspere's plays harder to characterize. . . . I am half inclined to believe, that Shakspere's main object, or shall I rather say, his ruling impulse, was to translate the poetic heroes of paganism into the not less rude, but more intellectually vigorous, and more *featurely,* warriors of Christian chivalry — and to substantiate the distinct and graceful profiles or outlines

of the Homeric epic into the flesh and blood of the romantic drama, — in short, to give a grand history-piece in the robust style of Albert Durer. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, pp.* 306, 308.

Would you see his mind unfettered, read "Troilus and Cressida," where he treats the materials of the "Iliad" in his own fashion. — ECKERMANN, JOHN PETER, 1825, *Conversations of Goethe.*

The play is, in all respects, a very remarkable and singular reproduction; and it has perplexed many a critic, not, as usual, by smaller difficulties of readings and interpretation, but by doubts as to the author's design and spirit. Its beauties are of the highest order. It contains passages fraught with moral truth and political wisdom — high truths, in large and philosophical discourse, such as remind us of the loftiest disquisitions of Hooker, or Jeremy Taylor, on the foundations of social law. . . . Nor is there any drama more rich in variety and truth of character. . . . With all this, there is large alloy of inferior matter, such as Shakespeare too often permitted himself to use, in filling up the chasms of the scene, between loftier and brighter thoughts. More especially is there felt, by every reader, a sense of disappointment at the unsatisfactory effect of the whole, arising mainly from the want of unity in that effect, and in the interest of the plot — at the desultory and purposeless succession of incident and dialogue, all resembling (as Walter Scott well observes) "a legend, or a chronicle, rather than a dramatic composition." — VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

"Troilus and Cressida" is Shakespeare's wisest play in the way of worldly wisdom. It is filled choke-full of sententious, and in most cases slightly satirical revelations of human nature, uttered with a felicity of phrase and an impressiveness of metaphor that make each one seem like a beam of light shot into the recesses of man's heart. . . . If we would know what Shakespeare thought of men and their motives after he reached maturity, we have but to read this drama; drama it is; but with what other character, who shall say? For, like the world's pageant, it is neither tragedy nor comedy, but a tragi-comic history, in which the intrigues of amorous men and light-o'-loves and the brokerage of panders are mingled with the deliberations of sages and the strife and the death of heroes. — WHITE, RICHARD GRANT, 1877, *On Reading Shakespeare, Galaxy, vol. 23, pp. 233, 235.*

This is the most difficult of all Shakspere's plays to deal with, as well for date as position. . . . The play is evidently written in ill-humour with mankind; it is a bitter satire. Its purpose is not to show virtue her own feature, but contemptible weakness, paltry vanity, falsehood (like scorn), their own image. . . . Shakspere's treatment of Chaucer's heroine, Cressida, is, too, a shock to any lover of the early poet's work. To have the beautiful Cressida, hesitating, palpitating like the nightingale, before her sin; driven by force of hard circumstances which she could not control into unfaithfulness to her love; to have this Cressida, whom Chaucer spared for very ruth, set before us as a mere shameless wanton, making eyes at all the men she sees, and showing her looseness in the movement of every limb, is a terrible

blow. But whatever may have been Shakspere's motive in this play, we certainly have in it his least pleasing production. There is no relief to the patchery, the jugglery, and the knavery, except the generous welcome of Nestor to Hector in the Grecian camp, and his frank praise of the gallant Trojan, who, labouring for Destiny, made cruel way through ranks of Greekish youth. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere.*

The point of special import and significance is that Shakespeare *always* shows a predilection for the Trojans, while the Greeks find but little favour in his sight. This undoubted bias on his part exhibits itself in an especially lively manner, and has widest scope, in "Troilus and Cressida." There are far grander works amongst Shakespeare's plays, but there is none more curious, — there is none that affords more matter for reflection and commentary in the realms, not only of learning and of history, but also of æsthetics, than does "Troilus and Cressida." — STAPFER, PAUL, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity, tr. Carey, p.* 157.

In spite of the admirable characterization in "Troilus and Cressida," and in spite of the host of imperishable sayings marked by a wealth of practical wisdom, there is no other drama of Shakespeare which appeals to us so little, which creates so unpleasing an impression. — TEN BRINK, BERNHARD, 1892–95, *Five Lectures on Shakespeare, tr. Franklin, p.* 93.

The effect of anti-climax and of all diminishing series is an unsatisfactory one. But the theme of the play is

the *destruction* of *system* and *unity*, the factious disorganization of the Grecian camp; it is a picture of disorder and the overthrow of rule; and it is quite possible that the dramatist, whose genius was of the boldest and most innovating character, designedly left the picture without æsthetic totality in order to enhance the effect and deepen the impression made by the portrayal of principles which are the source of all imbecility. — RUGGLES, HENRY J., 1895, *The Plays of Shakespeare Founded on Literary Forms*, *p.* 399.

It was a curious coincidence that Shakespeare should lay hands on this material just at the most despondent period of his life; for nowhere could we well receive a deeper impression of modern crudeness and decadence, and never could we meet with a fuller expression of German-Gothic innate barbarism in relation to Hellenism than when we see this great poet of the Northern Renaissance make free with the poetry of the old world. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study*, *vol.* II, *p.* 206.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

1606–7

The highest praise, or rather form of praise, of this play, which I can offer in my own mind, is the doubt which the perusal always occasions in me, whether the "Antony and Cleopatra" is not, in all exhibitions of a giant power in its strength and vigour of maturity, a formidable rival of "Macbeth," "Lear," "Hamlet," and

"Othello." . . . Of all Shakspere's historical plays, "Antony and Cleopatra" is by far the most wonderful. There is not one in which he has followed history so minutely, and yet there are few in which he impresses the notion of angelic strength so much; — perhaps none in which he impresses it more strongly. This is greatly owing to the manner in which the fiery force is sustained throughout, and to the numerous momentary flashes of nature counteracting the historic abstraction. As a wonderful specimen of the way in which Shakspere lives up to the very end of this play, read the last part of the concluding scene. And if you would feel the judgment as well as the genius of Shakspere in your hearts' core, compare this astonishing drama with Dryden's "All For Love." — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, pp.* 315, 316.

I have not the slightest doubt that Shakspeare's Cleopatra is the real historical Cleopatra — the "Rare Egyptian" — individualised and placed before us. Her mental accomplishments, her unequalled grace, her woman's wit and woman's wiles, her irresistible allurements, her starts of irregular grandeur, her bursts of ungovernable temper, her vivacity of imagination, her petulant caprice, her fickleness and her falsehood, her tenderness and her truth, her childish susceptibility to flattery, her magnificent spirit, her royal pride, the gorgeous Eastern colouring of the character; all these contradictory elements has Shakspeare seized, mingled them in their extremes, and fused them into one brilliant impersonation of classical elegance, Oriental voluptuousness, and gypsy sorcery. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

I am not aware that this play has been acted in modern times; nor do I believe it to be as great a favourite with readers in general as the high commendations of modern critics would lead me to expect. I know little of the histrionic art, but should imagine that Cleopatra, and Antony too, in good hands, would be exceedingly attractive on the stage; and there, perhaps, relying on the interest of the story, and the good acting, we should not so much miss that force and dignity of versification which captivate us in other plays, of which the plot and scenes are less interesting. — COURTENAY, THOMAS PEREGRINE, 1840, *Commentaries on the Historical Plays of Shakspeare, vol.* II, *p.* 275.

But independently of any other indications, it is certain that the ripe maturity of poetic mind pervades the whole tone of the tragedy, its diction, imagery, characters, thoughts. It exhibits itself everywhere, in a copious and varied magnificence, as from a mind and memory stored with the treasures acquired in its own past intellectual efforts, as well as with the knowledge of life and books, from all which the dramatic muse (to borrow the Oriental imagery which Milton has himself drawn from this very tragedy), like

> "the gorgeous East, with liberal hand,
> Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold."

Its poetry has an autumnal richness, such as can succeed only to the vernal luxuriance of genius, or its fiercer midsummer glow. We need no other proof than that which its own abundance affords, that this tragedy is the rich product of a mind where, as in Mark Antony's own Egypt, his "Nilus had swelled high," and

"when it ebb'd, the seedsman
Upon its slime and ooze scatter'd his grain,
Which shortly came to harvest."

— VERPLANCK, GULIAN CROMMELIN, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

The greatest monument of his dramatic subtlety is the tragedy of "Antony and Cleopatra." With all its noble bursts of passion and occasional splendour of description, this play has not perhaps the massive breadth of feeling and overpowering interest of the four great tragedies, "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Othello;" but it is greater even than "Macbeth" and "Othello" in the range of its mastery over the fluctuations of profound passion: it is the greatest of Shakespeare's plays in the dramatist's greatest faculty. The conflict of motives in "Hamlet" is an achievement of genius that must always be regarded with wonder and reverence; but, to my mind, "Antony and Cleopatra" is the dramatist's masterpiece. One may have less interest in the final end of the subtle changes wrought in the hero and heroine: but in the pursuit and certain grasp of those changes, Shakespeare's dramatic genius appears at its supreme height. — MINTO, WILLIAM, 1874–85, *Characteristics of English Poets, p.* 318.

On "Antony and Cleopatra" Shakspere has poured out the glory of his genius in profusion, and makes us stand by, saddened and distressed, as the noble Antony sinks to his ruin, under the gorgeous colouring of the Eastern sky, the vicious splendour of the Egyptian queen; makes us look with admiring hate on the wonderful picture he has drawn, certainly far the most wonderful

study of woman he has left us, of that Cleopatra of whom Enobarbus, who knew her every turn, said,

> 'Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety; other women
> Cloy the appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies."

That in her, the dark woman of Shakspere's "Sonnets," his own fickle, serpent-like, attractive mistress, is to some extent embodied, I do not doubt. What a superbly sumptuous picture, as if painted by Veronese or Titian, is that where Cleopatra first met Antony upon the river of Cydnus! How admirably transferred from Plutarch's prose! And how that fatal inability to say "No" to woman shows us Antony's weakness and the cause of his final fall. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere, Introduction to the Play.*

The final impression left upon the mind by this woman, in whom there was no real goodness or grandeur of character, is that of grace and a fascination that never leave her from the beginning to the end, and in her last moments, that of majesty. As an example of the magic power of beauty and of poetry Shakespeare's Cleopatra stands alone. — STAPFER, PAUL, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity, tr. Carey, p.* 408.

In the later scenes Antony is still shown as a noble ruin. His dealing with Enobarbus, when deserted even by that once honest friend, is one clear indication of the generosity of Antony's large nature. He beats strong wings and lifts his head as if to soar, caught as an eagle

in the toils. The strength of his desire towards Cleopatra is the weakness of Antony; the strength of her desire towards Antony is the whole strength of Cleopatra. Beyond that, her care in life is artifice of her profession as a beauty, who, at the age of thirty-eight, cannot afford to trust too simply to Nature. She has, in her own strength, pathetic traces at the last of that which might have been the glory of her womanhood, had not her thoughts been low. — MORLEY, HENRY, AND GRIFFIN, W. HALL, 1895, *English Writers, vol.* XI, *p.* 95.

Who knows! If he himself, William Shakespeare, had met her, who knows if he would have escaped with his life? And had he not met her? Was it not she whom in bygone days he had met and loved, and by whom he had been beloved and betrayed? It moved him strongly to find Cleopatra described as so dark, so tawny. His thoughts dwelt upon this. He too had stood in close relation to a dark, ensnaring woman — one whom in bitter moments he had been tempted to call a gipsy; "a right gipsy," as Cleopatra is called in this play, by those who are afraid of her or angry with her. She of whom he never thought without emotion, his black enchantress, his life's angel and fiend, whom he had hated and adored at the same time, whom he had despised even while he sued for her favour — what was she but a new incarnation of that dangerous, ensnaring serpent of the Nile! And how nearly had his whole inner world collapsed like a soap-bubble in his association with, and separation from, her! That would indeed have been the ruin of a world! How he had revelled and writhed, exulted and complained in those days! played ducks and drakes with his life, squandered his days and nights! Now he was a maturer man,

a gentleman, a landed proprietor and tithe-farmer; but in him still lived the artist Bohemian, fitted to mate with the gipsy queen. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *p.* 144.

CORIOLANUS

1607–8

He was a man too full of passion and choler, and too much given over to self-will and opinion, as one of a high mind and great courage, that lacked the gravity and affability that is gotten with judgment of learning and reason, which only is to be looked for in a governor of State: and that remembered not how wilfulness is the thing of the world, which a governor of a commonwealth, for pleasing, should shun, being that which Plato called "solitariness;" as in the end, all men that are wilfully given to a self-opinion and obstinate mind, and who will never yield to other's reason but to their own, remain without company, and forsaken of all men. For a man that will live in the world must needs have patience, which lusty bloods make but a mock at. So Marcius, being a stout man of nature, that never yielded in any respect, as one thinking that to overcome always and to have the upper hand in all matters, was a token of magnanimity and of no base and faint courage, which spitteth out anger from the most weak and passioned part of the beast, much like the matter of an impostume: went home to his house, full freighted with spite and malice against the people. — NORTH, SIR THOMAS, 1579, *tr. Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus.*

The Tragedy of "Coriolanus" is one of the most amusing of our author's performances. The old man's merriment in Menenius; the lofty lady's dignity in Volumnia; the bridal modesty in Vergilia; the patrician and military haughtiness in Coriolanus; the plebian malignity and tribunitian insolence in Brutus and Sicinius, make a very pleasing and interesting variety; and the various revolutions of the hero's fortune, fill the mind with anxious curiosity. There is perhaps too much bustle in the first act, and too little in the last. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakespeare's Plays.*

To reduce the history of Coriolanus into a play was one of those labours, which our dramatic Hercules has achieved in a most wonderful manner; but after all, the labour is scarcely worth the pains, for, except the singularly noble character of Coriolanus, there is nothing correctly great in the piece. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 340.

Shakespear has in this play shown himself well versed in history and state affairs. "Coriolanus" is a storehouse of political commonplaces. Any one who studies it may save himself the trouble of reading Burke's "Reflections," or Paine's "Rights of Man," or the Debates in both Houses of Parliament since the French Revolution or our own. The arguments for and against aristocracy or democracy, on the privileges of the few and the claims of the many, on liberty and slavery, power and the abuse of it, peace and war, are here very ably handled, with the spirit of a poet and the acuteness of a philosopher. Shakespear himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary

side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion of bating the rabble. What he says of them is very true: what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, *p.* 49.

In Volumnia, Shakspeare has given us the portrait of a Roman matron, conceived in the true antique spirit, and finished in every part. Although Coriolanus is the hero of the play, yet much of the interest of the action and the final catastrophe turn upon the character of his mother, Volumnia, and the power she exercised over his mind, by which, according to the story, "she saved Rome and lost her son." Her lofty patriotism, her patrician haughtiness, her maternal pride, her eloquence, and her towering spirit, are exhibited with the utmost power of effect; yet the truth of female nature is beautifully preserved, and the portrait, with all its vigour, is without harshness. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

The subject of "Coriolanus" is the ruin of a noble life through the sin of pride. If duty be the dominant ideal with Brutus, and pleasure of a magnificent kind be the ideal of Antony and Cleopatra, that which gives tone and colour to Coriolanus is an ideal of self-centred power. The greatness of Brutus is altogether that of the moral conscience; his external figure does not dilate upon the world through a golden haze like that of Antony, nor bulk massively and tower like that of Coriolanus. Brutus venerates his ideals, and venerates himself; but this veneration of self is in a certain sense disinterested. A

haughty and passionate personal feeling, a superb egoism, are with Coriolanus the sources of weakness and of strength. — DOWDEN, EDWARD, 1875–80, *Shakspere: A Critical Study of his Mind and Art, p.* 282.

A loftier or a more perfect piece of man's work was never done in all the world than this tragedy of "Coriolanus." — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 188.

There is more unity in the tragedy of "Coriolanus" than in either of the other Roman plays; yet, grand and powerful as it is, its tragical interest is less than that of "Julius Cæsar," and its poetical merit less than that of "Antony and Cleopatra." There is something hard about it, both in sentiment and in style. The delineation of social and personal pride is not a subject to evoke much sympathy or emotion, and although it may in its course reach sublime heights, its sublimity is wholly independent of moral greatness. Of all Shakespeare's greater works, this is the most difficult to construe; the unintelligibility of several passages is doubtless due to some corruption of the text, but besides this, the general style is exceedingly obscure, and overloaded with metaphorical and elliptical expressions. Even the great scene between Coriolanus and his mother is not of uniform excellence. — STAPFER, PAUL, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity, tr. Carey, p.* 454.

"Coriolanus" was directly derived from Sir Thomas North's famous version of Plutarch's "Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans," the book to which Shakespeare was indebted also for his "Julius Cæsar," "Antony and

Cleopatra," and, to some extent, for "Timon of Athens," and which has been fittingly described as "most sovereign in its dominion over the minds of great men in all ages." North's monumental version is one of the masterpieces of English prose, and no better proof exists than a comparison of the play with its original. Shakespeare has borrowed North's very vocabulary, and many of his most striking effects; so closely does he follow the whole history that North's prose may actually assist in restoring a defective passage. — GOLLANCZ, ISRAEL, 1896, *ed. Temple Shakespeare, Coriolanus, Preface.*

TIMON OF ATHENS

1607–8

I am now to present your Grace with this History of *Timon*, which you were pleased to tell me you liked, and it is the more worthy of you, since it has the inimitable hand of *Shakespear* in it, which never made more Masterly strokes than in this. — SHADWELL, THOMAS, 1678, *The History of Timon of Athens, the Man-Hater, made into a play. Epistle Dedicatory.*

The play of Timon is a domestic tragedy, and therefore strongly fastens on the attention of the reader. In the plan there is not much art, but the incidents are natural, and the characters various and exact. The catastrophe affords a very powerful warning against that ostentatious liberality, which scatters bounty, but confers no benefits, and buys flattery, but not friendship. In this tragedy,

are many passages perplexed, obscure, and probably corrupt, which I have endeavoured to rectify, or explain, with due dilligence; but, having only one copy, cannot promise myself that my endeavours shall be much applauded. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

"Timon of Athens" always appeared to us to be written with as intense a feeling of his subject as any one play of Shakespear. It is one of the few in which he seems to be in earnest throughout, never to trifle nor go out of his way. He does not relax in his efforts, nor lose sight of the unity of his design. It is the only play of our author in which spleen is the predominant feeling of the mind. It is as much a satire as a play: and contains some of the finest pieces of invective possible to be conceived, both in the snarling, captious answers of the cynic Apemantus, and in the impassioned and more terrible imprecations of Timon. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, p.* 44.

"Timon of Athens" forms the beautiful close of Shakspeare's poetical career. It reflects more clearly than any other piece, the poet's consciousness of the nothingness of human life and nature in themselves, and a christian reliance on God, as the source of all that is abiding and permanent. We distinctly see him abandoning the trifling pursuits and contentions of this life, for calm heavenly meditation; but at the same time we see, that before he could arrive at this repose, his path had been crossed by many and heavy conflicts. Indeed, when we compare this tragedy with others which belong probably to his latest labours, the confession is forced from us that his

view of the world and things, even in its *artistic* side, must have been somewhat troubled in the latter years of his career. — ULRICI, HERMANN, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art, p.* 243.

The principle which we seek to establish, namely, that the "Timon of Athens" was a play originally produced by an artist very inferior to Shakspere, and which probably retained possession of the stage for some time in its first form; that it has come down to us not only re-written, but so far re-modelled that entire scenes of Shakspere have been substituted for entire scenes of the elder play; and lastly, that this substitution has been almost wholly confined to the character of Timon, and that in the development of that character alone, with the exception of some few occasional touches here and there, we must look for the unity of the Shaksperean conception of the Greek Misanthropos — the Timon of Aristophanes and Lucian and Plutarch — "the enemy to mankind," of the popular story books — of the "Pleasant Histories and excellent Novels," which were greedily devoured by the contemporaries of the boyish Shakspere. — KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere, bk.* ii, *ch.* iv, *p.* 70.

It certainly is not like the sepia sketch of a great master, perfect so far as it goes; nor yet like an unfinished picture which shews the basis of the artist's work; nor yet like those paintings of the old masters, in which the accessories were filled in by the 'prentice hands of their pupils, while the design and prominent figures indicated the taste and skill of high genius. It is rather an old painting, retouched perhaps in all its parts, and the prominent figures entirely remodeled by the hand of the great master,

but designed and originally completed by a stranger. Of the type of Timon's character there can be no doubt. He is unmistakably of the family of Hamlet and Lear. The resemblance to Lear especially is close; like him at first, full of unreasoning confidence; like him at last, full of unreasoning hate. — BUCKNILL, JOHN CHARLES, M.D., 1859-67, *The Mad Folk of Shakespeare*, *p.* 236.

"Timon of Athens" unquestionably contains much matter from another hand. . . . The unShakespearian characters in the play are three Lords — Lucius, Lucullus, and Sempronius; three Servants — Flavius (Steward always in the Shakespeare part), Flaminius, and Servilius; three Strangers; three Creditors — Hortensius, Philotus, and 2d Varro; three Masquers; and the Soldier.— FLEAY, FREDERICK GARD, 1886, *Chronicle History of the Life and Work of William Shakespeare*, *pp.* 242, 243.

The play is, however, one of the less celebrated and less attractive among Shakespeare's works. The theme itself is not the most enticing, and its treatment must be pronounced to be in many respects unsatisfactory. The inequality of the execution will be acknowledged by every careful reader. Some parts are wrought out with great skill and completeness; others are hastily and rudely sketched, while certain necessary links seem to be omitted altogether. The versification is often a mystery, and the prose frequently appears to be written with exceeding carelessness. But the main characteristic of the play is the dark coloring in which it portrays social life. Its speech is steeped in bitterness; it contains the most vindictive utterances against mankind to be found in Shakespeare. A noble, generous character is victimized to the

last degree, and driven forward to suicide. Unselfishness apparently becomes tragic in a selfish world. Still, the other side is not neglected; this very unselfishness is seen to be at bottom selfish. Timon is guilty, and has to take the consequence of his deed. He turns misanthrope, full of vehement sarcasm and red-hot imprecation. The latter part of the play, in particular, is a bath of gall. — SNIDER, DENTON JAQUES, 1887, *The Shakespearian Drama, The Tragedies, p.* 13.

"Timon of Athens" has come down to us in a pitiable condition. The text is in a terrible state, and there are, not only between one scene and another, but between one page and another, such radical differences in the style and general spirit of the play as to preclude the possibility of its having been the work of one man. The threads of the story are often entirely disconnected, and circumstances occur (or are referred to) for which we were in no way prepared. The best part of the versification is distinctly Shakespearian, and contains all that wealth of thought which was characteristic of this period of his life; but the other parts are careless, discordant, and desperately monotonous. The prose dialogue especially jars, thrust as it is, with its long-winded straining after effect, into scenes which are otherwise compact and vigorous. All Shakespeare students of the present day concur in the opinion that "Timon of Athens," like "Pericles," is but a great fragment from the master-hand. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II. *p.* 254.

PERICLES

1608

THE LATE, | And much admired Play, | Called | Pericles, Prince | of Tyre, | With the true Relation of the whole Historie, aduentures, and fortunes of the said Prince: | As also, | The no lesse strange, and worthy accidents, | in the Birth and Life, of his Daughter | MARIANA. | As it hath been diuers and sundry times acted by | his Maiesties Seruants, at the Globe on | the Banckside. | By William Shakespeare. | Imprinted at London for *Henry Gosson* | and are | to be sold at the Signe of the Sunne in | Paternoster Row. 1609. — TITLE PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION, 1609.

And if it prove so happy as to please,
Weele say 'tis fortunate like *Pericles*.

— TAYLOR, ROBERT, 1614, *The Hogge hath lost his Pearle, Prologue.*

With Sophocles we may
Compare great Shakespeare: Aristophanes
Never like him his Fancy could display,
Witness the *Prince of Tyre, his Pericles.*

— SHEPPARD, SAMUEL, 1646, *The Times displayed in Six Sestyads.*

But Shakespeare, the plebeian driller, was
Founder'd in his Pericles, and must not pass.

— TATHAM, J., 1652, *In "Jovial Crew" by Richard Brome.*

We dare not charge the whole unequal play
Of Pericles on him; yet let us say,
As gold tho' mix'd with baser metal shines,
So do his bright inimitable lines
Throughout those rude wild scenes distinguish'd stand
And shew he touch'd them with no sparing hand.

— LILLO, GEORGE, 1738, *Marina, Prologue.*

This tragedy, I think, exhibits no equitable claim to be regarded as a work of Shakspeare's, any more than that with which it is most worthily associated, in the same volume, "Titus Andronicus." If one of these compositions is ludicrously shocking, the other is shockingly ludicrous; and the poet's reputation, I believe, would have been better consulted, by dismissing them both to contempt and oblivion. — SEYMOUR, E. H., 1805, *Remarks on Shakspeare, vol.* II, *p.* 436.

Many will be of opinion that it contains more that *he might have written* than either "Love's labour's lost," or "All's well that ends well." — DOUCE, FRANCIS, 1807, *Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol.* II, *p.* 144.

However wild and extravagant the fable of "Pericles" may appear, if we consider its numerous choruses, its pageantry, and dumb shows, its continual succession of incidents, and the great length of time which they occupy, yet is it, we may venture to assert, the most spirited and pleasing specimen of the nature and fabric of our earliest romantic drama which we possess, and the more valuable, as it is the only one with which Shakspeare has favoured us. . . . From the extensive survey which has now been taken of the merits and supposed era of this early drama,

the reader, it is probable, will gather sufficient data for concluding that by far the greater part of it issued from the pen of Shakspeare, that it was his first dramatic production, that it appeared towards the close of the year 1590, and that it deserves to be removed from the Appendix to the editions of Shakspeare, where it has hitherto appeared, and incorporated in the body of his works. — DRAKE, NATHAN, 1817, *Shakspeare and His Times, vol.* II, *pp.* 266–286.

Though it contains one fine scene and many scattered beauties, the play is a bad one; it is destitute of reality and art, and is entirely alien to Shakspeare's system: it is interesting only as marking the point from which he started; and it seems to belong to his works as a last monument of that which he overthrew — as a remnant of that anti-dramatic scaffolding for which he was about to substitute the presence and movement of vitality. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times, p.* 67.

It is generally believed that he had much to do with the tragedy of "Pericles," which is now printed among his works, and which external testimony, though we should not rely too much on that as to Shakspeare, has assigned to him; but the play is full of evident marks of an inferior hand. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1837–39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 35.

If it be the work of Shakspere, the foundations of it were laid when his art was imperfect, and he laboured somewhat in subjection to the influence of those ruder

models for which he eventually substituted his own splendid examples of dramatic excellence. — KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere, bk.* ii, *ch.* ii, *p.* 53.

The work as it has come down to us is not in reality a drama at all, but an incompletely dramatised epic poem. . . . Thus the germs of all his latest works lie in this unjustly neglected and despised play, which has suffered under a double disadvantage: it is not entirely Shakespeare's work, and in such portions of it as are his own there exist, in the dark shadow cast by her hideous surroundings about Marina, traces of that gloomy mood from which he was but just emerging. But for all that, whether we look upon it as a contribution to Shakespeare's biography or as a poem, this beautiful and remarkable fragment, "Pericles," is a work of the greatest interest.—BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *pp.* 279, 295.

Great part of it *must* be Shakespeare's; there is perhaps no part that *might* not be; and the general characteristics of story-management and versification are a very odd mixture of his earliest and his latest manner — a "Love's Labour's Lost" blended with a "Winter's Tale." — SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature, p.* 327.

TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

1609

THE | TWO | NOBLE | KINSMEN: | Presented at the Blackfriars | by the Kings Maiesties servants, | with great

applause: | Written by the memorable Worthies of their time; | { Mr. John Fletcher, and / Mr. William Shakspeare. } Gent. | Printed at *London* by *Tho. Cotes*, for *Iohn Waterson:* | and are to be sold at the signe of the *Crowne* | in *Pauls* Church-yard. 1634. — TITLE PAGE OF FIRST EDITION, 1634.

This play is said to have been written by Shakespear and Fletcher, a circumstance which the editor of Beaumont and Fletcher seems to be greatly concerned about, probably out of tenderness for the reputation of Fletcher, but he need not have made himself in the smallest degree uneasy, for the play itself sufficiently proves that Shakespear had no hand in it. Indeed there is not much reputation to be claimed by any body, for the story is Chaucer's "Knights Tale," which we have seen already treated by Edwards to the great delight of queen Elizabeth. There is something, however, gaudy and fine in it; and, like most of the works of Beaumont and Fletcher, it resembles a parterre appearing so full of colours that form and symmetry are not once thought of. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 209.

I have no doubt whatever that the first act and the first scene of the second act of "The Two Noble Kinsmen" are Shakspere's. — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1833, *Table-Talk, Feb.* 17.

Be the authorship whose it may, "The Two Noble Kinsmen" is undoubtedly one of the finest dramas in the volumes before us.[1] It contains passages which, in dramatic vigour and passion, yield hardly to anything —

[1] Dyce's "Beaumont and Fletcher."

perhaps to nothing — in the whole collection; while for gorgeousness of imagery, for delicacy of poetic feeling, and for grace, animation, and strength of language, we doubt whether there exists, under the names of our authors, any drama that comes near to it. — SPALDING, WILLIAM, 1847, *Dyce's Beaumont and Fletcher, Edinburgh Review, vol.* 86, *p.* 58.

For our own part, we wish that the question were as simple as in the case of "Henry VIII.," but we do not find it so. We were at first ready to agree with Spalding and Hickson — with the latter rather than the former on the points as to which they differ — but on more careful study of the play, we find ourself wavering, as Spalding did, and coming to regard the problem as "really insoluble." Shakespeare perhaps had a share in the play; but, if so, it is impossible to decide just what it was, or how it came about. — ROLFE, WILLIAM J., 1883, *ed. The Two Noble Kinsmen, Introduction, p.* 21.

The play is of no particular value; it is far inferior to Fletcher's best work, and not to be compared with any of Shakespeare's completed dramas. Nevertheless, many eminent critics of this century have found distinct traces in this play of the styles of both greater and lesser poet. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *p.* 310.

THE TEMPEST

1610

If there bee never a *Servant-monster* i' the *Fayre*, who can helpe it? he sayes; nor a nest of *Antiques?* Hee is loth to make Nature afraid in his *Playes*, like those that beget *Tales*, *Tempests*, and such like *Drolleries*, to mixe his head with other mens heeles. — JONSON, BEN, 1614, *Bartholomew Fayre, Induction.*

November 7. — At noon resolved with Sir W. Pen to go see "The Tempest," an old play of Shakespeare's, acted, I hear, the first day. . . . The house mighty full; the King and Court there: and the most innocent play that ever I saw; and a curious piece of musique in an echo of half sentences, the echo repeating the former half, while the man goes on to the latter; which is mighty pretty. The play [has] no great wit, but yet good, above ordinary plays. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1667, *Diary and Correspondence.*

No man ever drew so many characters, or generally distinguished 'em better from one another, excepting only *Johnson:* I will instance but in one, to show the copiousness of his invention; 'tis that of "Calyban," or the monster in "The Tempest." He seems there to have created a person which was not in Nature, a boldness which at first sight would appear intolerable; for he makes him a species of himself, begotten by an "Incubus" on a Witch; but this, as I have elsewhere prov'd, is not wholly beyond the bounds of credibility, at least the vulgar stile believe it. We have the separated notions

of a spirit and of a witch; (and spirits, according to "Plato," are vested with a subtil body; according to some of his followers, have different sexes) therefore as from the distinct apprehensions of a horse, and of a man, Imagination has form'd a "Centaur," so from those of an "Incubus" and a "Sorceress," *Shakespear* has produc'd his Monster. Whether or no his generation can be defended, I leave to Philosophy; but of this I am certain, the Poet has most judiciously furnish'd him with a person, a language, and a character which will suit him both by Father's and Mother's side: he has all the discontents and malice of a Witch, and of a Devil; besides a convenient proportion of the deadly sins; Gluttony, Sloth, and Lust, are manifest; the dejectedness of a slave is likewise given him, and the ignorance of one bred up in a Desart Island. His person is monstrous, as he is the product of unnatural lust; and his language is as hobgoblin as his person; in all things he is distinguished from other mortals. — DRYDEN, JOHN, 1679, *Troilus and Cressida, Preface.*

This drama is one of the noblest efforts of that sublime and amazing imagination, peculiar to Shakspeare, which soars above the bounds of nature, without forsaking sense; or, more properly, carries nature along with him beyond her established limits. — WARBURTON, WILLIAM, 1747, *Shakspear Plays, with Comment and Notes.*

An Attempte To Rescue that Aunciente, English Poet, And Play-Wrighte, Maister Williaume Shakespere, from the Maney Errours, faulsely charged on him, by Certaine New-fangled Wittes; And To let him Speak for Himself, as right well he wotteth, when Freede from the

many Careless Mistakeings, of The Heedless first Imprinters, of his Workes. By a Gentleman formerly of Greys-Inn. — HOLT, JOHN, 1749, *Title Page.*

But whatever might be Shakspeare's intention in forming or adopting the plot, he has made it instrumental to the production of many characters, diversified with boundless invention, and preserved with profound skill in nature, extensive knowledge of opinions, and accurate observation of life. In a single drama are here exhibited princes, courtiers, and sailors, all speaking in their real characters. There is the agency of airy spirits, and of an earthly goblin; the operations of magic, the tumults of a storm, the adventures of a desert island, the native effusion of untaught affection, the punishment of guilt, and the final happiness of the pair for whom our passions and reason are equally interested. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

The character of Caliban, in the "Tempest," is singularly original: but the almost animal figure, which his dress must give him, turns the attention from all that is philosophical in the conception of this part. — STAËL, MADAME DE, 1800, *The Influence of Literature upon Society, vol.* I, *p.* 271.

The "Tempest" is one of the most original and perfect of Shakespear's productions, and he has shown in it all the variety of his powers. It is full of grace and grandeur. The human and imaginary characters, the dramatic and the grotesque, are blended together with the greatest art, and without any appearance of it. Though he has here given "to airy nothing a local habitation and a

name," yet that part which is only the fantastic creation of his mind has the same palpable texture, and coheres "semblably" with the rest. As the preternatural part has the air of reality, and almost haunts the imagination with a sense of truth, the real characters and events partake of the wildness of a dream. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, *p.* 82.

None of his other plays are more amusing or more animated than this, and in none is a lively, and even waggish, gayety more naturally conjoined with serious interests, melancholy feelings, and touching affections. It is a fairy tale in all the force of the term, and in all the vivacity of the impressions which such a tale can impart. — GUIZOT, FRANÇOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times*, *p.* 356.

The character of Miranda resolves itself into the very elements of womanhood. She is beautiful, modest, and tender, and she is these only; they comprise her whole being, external and internal. She is so perfectly unsophisticated, so delicately refined, that she is all but ethereal. Let us imagine any other woman placed beside Miranda — even one of Shakspeare's own loveliest and sweetest creations — there is not one of them that could sustain the comparison for a moment; not one that would not appear somewhat coarse or artificial when brought into immediate contact with this pure child of nature, this "Eve of an enchanted Paradise." What, then, has Shakspeare done? — "O wondrous skill and sweet wit of the man!" — he has removed Miranda far from all comparison with her own sex; he has placed her between the demi-demon of earth and the delicate spirit of air. The

next step is into the ideal and supernatural; and the only being who approaches Miranda, with whom she can be contrasted, is Ariel. Beside the subtle essence of this ethereal sprite, this creature of elemental light and air, that "ran upon the winds, rode the curl'd clouds, and in the colours of the rainbow lived," Miranda herself appears a palpable reality, a woman, "breathing thoughtful breath," a woman, walking the earth in her mortal loveliness, with a heart as frail-strung, as passion-touched, as ever fluttered in a female bosom. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

Caliban has not yet been thoroughly fathomed. For all Shakspeare's great creations are, like works of nature, subject of inexhaustible study. It was this character of whom Charles I. and some of his ministers expressed such fervent admiration; and, among other circumstances, most justly they admired the new language almost with which he is endowed for the purpose of expressing his fiendish and yet carnal thoughts of hatred to his master. Caliban is evidently not meant for scorn, but for abomination mixed with fear and partial respect. He is purposely brought into contrast with the drunken Trinculo and Stephano, with an advantageous result. He is much more intellectual than either, — uses a more elevated language not disfigured by vulgarisms, and is not liable to the low passion for plunder, as they are. He is mortal, doubtless, as his "dam" (for Shakspeare will not call her mother) Sycorax. But he inherits from her such qualities of power as a witch could be supposed to bequeath. He trembles indeed before Prospero; but that is, as we are to understand, through the moral superiority of Prospero in Christian wisdom; for, when he finds himself in the

presence of dissolute and unprincipled men, he rises at once into the dignity of intellectual power.—De Quincey, Thomas, 1838–63? *Shakspeare, Works, ed. Masson, vol.* iv, *p.* 85, *note.*

"The Tempest" is one of those works for which no other production of the author's prolific fancy could have prepared his readers. It is wholly of a different cast of temper, and mood of disposition, from those so conspicuous in his gayer comedies; while even the ethical dignity and poetic splendour of "The Merchant of Venice" could not well lead the critic to anticipate the solemn grandeur, the unrivalled harmony and grace, the bold originality, and the grave beauty of "The Tempest." — Verplanck, Gulian Crommelin, 1844–47, *ed. The Illustrated Shakespeare.*

The thoughtful reader will find in the compact simplicity of its structure, and in the chastened grandeur of its diction and the lofty severity of its tone of thought, tempered although the one is with Shakespeare's own enchanting sweetness, and the other with that most human tenderness which is the peculiar trait of his mind, sufficient evidence that this play is the fruit of his genius in its full maturity. — White, Richard Grant, 1858, *ed. The Works of William Shakespeare, vol.* ii, *p.* 7.

Shakespeare has combined all the resources of his wonderful imagination; and in it has with consummate skill displayed the vast variety of his powers. In this latter quality — that of his variety — the play may be pronounced the most original, as well as the most complete of his productions. It is at once instinct with

grace and beauty, grandeur and sublimity, mirth, cheerfulness, and broad humour. — CLARKE, CHARLES COWDEN, 1863, *Shakespeare Characters, p.* 275.

Only one man resisted this universal current [i.e. the belief in witchcraft promulgated by James.] That man was Shakespeare. Shakespeare did not as did Reginald Scot. He did not reject the traditions of the Bible nor the legends; he engrafted them. He did not question the existence of the invisible world; he rehabilitated it. He did not deny man's supernatural power; he consecrated it. James the Sixth said: Accursed be spirits! Shakespeare says: Glory be to spirits! — HUGO, FRANÇOIS-VICTOR, 1865, *Œuvres Complètes de Shakespeare, vol.* II, *Introduction, p.* 87.

If I read it rightly, it is an example of how a great poet should write allegory, — not embodying metaphysical abstractions, but giving us ideals abstracted from life itself, suggesting an under-meaning everywhere, forcing it upon us nowhere, tantalizing the mind with hints that imply so much and tell so little, and yet keep the attention all eye and ear with eager, if fruitless, expectation. Here the leading characters are not merely typical, but symbolical, — that is, they do not illustrate a class of persons, they belong to universal Nature. — LOWELL, JAMES RUSSELL, 1868–90, *Shakespeare Once More, Prose Works, Riverside ed., vol.* III, *p.* 59.

"The Tempest" is not one of those plays whose interest consists in strong dramatic situations. The course of the action is revealed from the first. Prospero is too manifestly the controlling spirit to arouse much concern

for his fortunes. Ferdinand and Miranda are soon put out of their pain, and Ariel lies beyond the limits of humanity. The action is simple and uniform, and all occurrences are seen converging slowly towards their destined point. No play, perhaps, more perfectly combines intellectual satisfaction with imaginative pleasure. Above and behind the fascination of the plot and the poetry we behold Power and Right evenly paired and working together, and the justification of Providence producing that sentiment of repose and acquiescence which is the object and test of every true work of art. — GARNETT, RICHARD, 1887–90, *Henry Irving Shakespeare, vol.* VII, *p.* 188.

Is there, then, nothing to be said in favour of Caliban? Is there really and truly no print of goodness in him? Kindly Nature never wholly deserts her offspring, nor does Shakespeare. We may be very sure that he, who knew so well that there is always some soul of goodness in things evil, would not have abandoned even Caliban without infusing into his nature some charm which might be observingly distilled out. Why is it that Caliban's speech is always rhythmical? There is no character in the play whose words fall at times into sweeter cadences; if the Æolian melodies of the air are sweet, the deep bass of the earth is no less rhythmically resonant. We who see Caliban only in his prime and, a victim of heredity, full grown, are apt to forget the years of his childhood and of his innocency, when Prospero fondled him, stroked him, and made much of him, Miranda taught him to speak, and with the sympathetic instinct of young girlhood interpreted his thoughts and endowed his purposes with words. — FURNESS, HORACE HOWARD, 1892, *New Variorum Shakespeare, The Tempest, vol.* IX, *p.* iv.

There is little in Homer that is not true to nature, but there is no phase of nature that is not in Shakespeare. Analyze the components of a Shakespearian play, and you will see that I make no overstatement. "The Tempest," a romantic play, is as notable as any for poetic quality and varied conception. It takes elemental nature for its scenes and background, the unbarred sky, the sea in storm and calm, the enchanted flowery isle, so

> "full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not."

The personages comprise many types, — king, noble, sage, low-born sailor, boisterous vagabond, youth and maiden in the heyday of their innocent love. To them are superadded beings of the earth and air, Caliban and Ariel, creations of the purest imagination. All these reveal their natures by speech and action, with a realism impossible to the tamer method of a narrative poem. Consider the poetic thought and diction: what can excel Prospero's vision of the world's dissolution that shall leave "not a rack behind," or his stately abjuration of the magic art? Listen, here and there, to the songs of his tricksy spirit, his brave chick, Ariel: "Come unto these yellow sands," "Full fathom five thy father lies," "Where the bee sucks, there suck I." Then we have a play within a play, lightening and decorating it, the masque of Iris, Ceres, and Juno. I recapitulate these details to give a perfectly familiar illustration of the scope of the drama. True, this was Shakespeare, but the ideal should be studied in a masterpiece; and such a play as "The Tempest" shows the possibilities of invention and imagination in the most synthetic poetic form over which genius has extended its domain. — STEDMAN, EDMUND CLARENCE, 1892, *The Nature and Elements of Poetry*, *p.* 106.

That rich, fantastic wonder-poem, "The Tempest," on which Shakespeare concentrated for the last time all the powers of his mind. Everything here is ordered and concise, and so inspired with thought that we seem to be standing face to face with the poet's idea. In spite of all its boldness of imagination, the dramatic order and condensation are such that the whole complies with the severest rules of Aristotle, the action of the entire play occupying in reality only three hours.—BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *p.* 361.

The splendour of sunset in the "Tempest" can escape no one, and the sternest opponent of guesswork must admit the probable presence of a designed allegory in the figure of Prospero and the burying of the book, the breaking of the staff, at the close. Even if this be thought too fanciful, nowhere has Shakespeare been more prodigal of every species of his enchantment. The exquisite but contrasted grace of Miranda and Ariel, the wonderful creation of Caliban, the varied human criticism in Gonzalo and the bad brothers, the farce-comedy of Stephano and Trinculo, do not more show the illimitable fancy and creative power of the master in scene and character than the passages, not so much scattered as showered over the whole play, show his absolute supremacy in poetry. Both in the blank verse and the lyrics, in the dialogue and the set *tirades*, in long contexts and short phrases alike, he shows himself absolute, with nothing out of reach of his faculty of expression and suggestion, with every resource of verbal music and intellectual demonstration at his command. — SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature, p.* 328.

CYMBELINE

1610–12

This play has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes, but they are obtained at the expense of much incongruity. To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names, and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation. — JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays.*

"Cymbeline" is one of the most delightful of Shakespear's historical plays. . . . We have almost as great an affection for Imogen as she had for Posthumus; and she deserves it better. Of all Shakespear's women she is perhaps the most tender and the most artless. Her incredulity in the opening scene with Iachimo, as to her husband's infidelity, is much the same as Desdemona's backwardness to believe Othello's jealousy. Her answer to the most distressing part of the picture is only, "My lord, I fear, has forgot Britain." Her readiness to pardon Iachimo's false imputations and his designs against herself, is a good lesson to prudes; and may show that where there is a real attachment to virtue, it has no need to bolster itself up with an outrageous or affected antipathy to vice. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, pp.* 1–3.

On the whole, Imogen is a lovely compound of goodness, truth, and affection, with just so much of passion

and intellect and poetry, as serve to lend to the picture that power and glowing richness of effect which it would otherwise have wanted; and of her it might be said, if we could condescend to quote from any other poet with Shakspeare open before us, that "her person was a paradise and her soul the cherub to guard it." — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

This play is perhaps the fittest in Shakspeare's whole theatre to illustrate the principle, that great dramatic genius can occasionally venture on bold improbabilities, and yet not only shrive the offence, but leave us enchanted with the offender. I think I exaggerate not, in saying that Shakspeare has nowhere breathed more pleasurable feelings over the mind, as an antidote to tragic pain, than in "Cymbeline." — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1838, *ed. Shakspeare's Plays, Moxon ed., Life.*

The play of plays, which is "Cymbeline," remains alone to receive the last salute of all my love. I think, as far as I can tell, I may say I have always loved this one beyond all other children of Shakespeare. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 225.

Yet the play is not merely a series of beautiful pictures, or interesting episodes, such as we are accustomed to find in the productions of dramatists of less renown. Here, as elsewhere in Shakespeare, everything is subservient to the development of character. From this point of view every scene contributes its share to the dénouement, nor is there any falling off observable in the power of the

artist; the master-hand is as discernible in these latest creations as in those of any earlier period. And he has put forth all his strength on the central figure of the drama, the matchless Imogen, to speak of whom is to sing one long pæan of praise, and whose very name is as full of music as her voice. In her is to be found everything that makes woman lovable, and there is no situation in which she is placed which does not reveal some fresh beauty in her character. — EVANS, H. A., 1887–90, *Henry Irving Shakespeare, vol.* VII, *p.* 86.

This play is peculiarly a play of regeneration, and shows in manifold characters the process by which the soul is to free itself of its weak, inadequate, sinful phases. We find here, even the unregenerate — Cloten and his mother, who persist in evil and perish, though they, too, have the same chance as the rest. They can not be mediated, they make the Inferno in this comedy, which, in certain respects, is Dantean. But the chief realm here is the Purgatory, which shows the erring man in the process of regeneration. Many forms he takes, from the demon Iachimo, through Posthumus, the King, Belarius; up to even the good ones, Imogen and Pisanio; all are going through the purgatorial discipline. Shakespeare's Purgatory, however, includes the guiltless and the guilty, in this being different from Dante's; the sinless have to suffer for and through the sinful, thereby attaining to completeness and passing from mere innocence to positive goodness. But we have also a touch of the primitive Paradise in the two youths and their mountain home. Theirs is the state of first innocence, without knowledge, but they thirst for experience, and quit their paradisaical abode, having the old Adam in them still. Thus the

play completes the cycle of the human, if not of the divine, comedy. — SNIDER, DENTON JAQUES, 1887, *The Shakespearian Drama, The Comedies, p.* 542.

The skill of the dramatist in opening his story, and preparing by clear touches for effects to be produced as it draws near the close, is a marked feature in all plays of Shakespeare, and nowhere more marked than in "Cymbeline." — MORLEY, HENRY, AND GRIFFIN, W. HALL, 1895, *English Writers, vol.* XI, *p.* 139.

In depth and variety of colouring, in richness of matter, profundity of thought, and heedlessness of conventional canons, "Cymbeline" has few rivals among Shakespeare's plays. Fascinating as it is, however, this tragi-comedy has never been very popular on the stage. The great public, indeed, has neither studied nor understood it. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *p.* 323.

WINTER'S TALE

1611

He said Shakespeare wanted art and sometimes sense, for in one of his plays he brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where is no sea near by 100 miles. — DRUMMOND, WILLIAM, 1619, *Notes on Ben Jonson's Conversations.*

The novel has nothing in it half so low and improbable as this contrivance of the statue; and indeed wherever

Shakespear has altered or invented, his "Winter's Tale" is greatly inferior to the old paltry story that furnished him with the subject of it. — LENNOX, CHARLOTTE, 1753–4, *Shakespear Illustrated.*

There is a scene in this play which is an exception to the rest, in being far more grand in exhibition than the reader will possibly behold in idea. This is the scene of the Statue, when Mrs. Siddons stands for Hermione. — INCHBALD, ELIZABETH, 1806–9, *British Theatre, vol.* XII.

The character of Hermione exhibits what is never found in the other sex, but rarely in our own — yet sometimes — dignity without pride, love without passion, and tenderness without weakness. To conceive a character in which there enters so much of the negative, required perhaps no rare and astonishing effort of genius, such as created a Juliet, a Miranda, or a Lady Macbeth; but to delineate such a character in the poetical form, to develop it through the medium of action and dialogue, without the aid of description; to preserve its tranquil, mild, and serious beauty, its unimpassioned dignity, and at the same time keep the strongest hold upon our sympathy and our imagination; and out of this exterior calm, produce the most profound pathos, the most vivid impression of life and internal power: — it is this which renders the character of Hermione one of Shakspeare's masterpieces. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1832, *Characteristics of Women.*

In this wild drama the comedy is excellent, the pastoral is exquisite; but of the scenes which carry on the plot, some appear to me to be harsh in the thought and infe-

licitous in diction: — Shakespeare throughout, but not always Shakespeare in a happy vein. — COLERIDGE, HARTLEY, 1849–51, *Essays and Marginalia, vol.* II, *p.* 148.

Accordingly the most remarkable stroke of genius in this play of Shakespeare is that he turned only into a comedy a subject which could furnish the most sombre of tragedies. He understood admirably that however violent and tragic were the acts, such a character would be necessarily comic. Indeed, so comic, that it is exactly the one which our Molière has drawn in *Sganarelle, ou le Cocu imaginaire.* Leontes is formidable otherwise than the poor *bourgeois* of Molière, for his folly is supplied with far different means of action; but they are brothers, if not in rank yet in nature, and their souls plunge into the same grotesque element. — MONTÉGUT, ÉMILE, 1867, *Œuvres Complètes de Shakespeare, vol.* III.

The last complete play of Shakspere's as it is, the golden glow of the sunset of his genius is over it, the sweet country air all through it; and of few, if any of his plays, is there a pleasanter picture in the memory than of "Winter's Tale." As long as men can think, shall Perdita brighten and sweeten, Hermione ennoble, men's minds and lives. How happily, too, it brings Shakspere before us, mixing with his Stratford neighbours at their sheep-shearing and country sports, enjoying the vagabond pedlar's gammon and talk, delighting in the sweet Warwickshire maidens, and buying them "fairings," telling goblin stories to the boys, "There was a man dwelt by a churchyard," — opening his heart afresh to all the innocent mirth, and the beauty of nature around him. — FURNIVALL, FREDERICK JAMES, 1877, *ed. The Leopold Shakspere, Introduction to the Play.*

The wild wind of the "Winter's Tale" at its opening would seem to blow us back into a winterier world indeed. And to the very end I must confess that I have in me so much of the spirit of Rachel weeping in Ramah as will not be comforted because Mamillius is not. It is well for those whose hearts are light enough, to take perfect comfort even in the substitution of his sister Perdita for the boy who died of "thoughts high for one so tender." Even the beautiful suggestion that Shakespeare as he wrote had in mind his own dead little son still fresh and living at his heart can hardly add more than a touch of additional tenderness to our perfect and piteous delight in him. And even in her daughter's embrace it seems hard if his mother should have utterly forgotten the little voice that had only time to tell her just eight words of that ghost story which neither she nor we were ever to hear ended. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 222.

Besides the ripe comedy, characteristic of Shakespeare at his latest, which indeed harmonizes admirably with the idyl of love to which it serves as background, there is also a harsh exhibition, in Leontes, of the meanest of the passions, an insane jealousy, petty and violent as the man who nurses it. For sheer realism, for absolute insight into the most cobwebbed corners of our nature, Shakespeare has rarely surpassed this brief study, which, in its total effect, does but throw out in brighter relief the noble qualities of the other actors beside him, the pleasant qualities of the play they make by their acting. — SYMONS, ARTHUR, 1887–90, *Henry Irving Shakespeare, vol.* VII, *p.* 320.

"The Winter's Tale," with its interval for sixteen years between two acts, may be said, too, to mark the final overthrow of Time — the hallowed "Unity of Time" — by its natural adversary, the Romantic Drama. The play recalls Sir Philip Sidney's criticism, in his "Apologie for Poetrie," anent the crude romantic plays popular about 1589, when he outlined a plot somewhat analogous to that of "The Winter's Tale" as a typical instance of the abuse of dramatic decorum by lawless playwrights, who, contrary to academic rule, neglected both "time and place." "The Winter's Tale," perhaps the very last of Shakespeare's comedies, appropriately emphasises, as it were, the essential elements of the triumph of the New over the Old. Sidney could not foresee, in 1580, the glorious future in store for the despised Cinderella of the playhouses,

"Now grown in grace
Equal with wondering."

— GOLLANCZ, ISRAEL, 1894, *ed. Temple Shakespeare, Preface, p.* x.

HENRY VIII.

1613

Now let matters of state sleep, I will entertain you at the present with what happened at the Bankside. The king's players had a new play, called "All is True," representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII., which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the knights of the Order, with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats and

the like; sufficient, in Truth, within a while to make greatness very familiar if not ridiculous. Now King Henry making a masque at the Cardinal Wolsey's House, and certain canons being shot off at his entrance, some of the paper, or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the thatch, where being thought at first but an idle smoak, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole House to the very grounds. — WOTTON, SIR HENRY, 1613, *Epistles.*

London this last of June 1613.

No longer since then yesterday, while Bourbege his companie were acting at ye Globe the play of Hen: 8, and there shooting of certayne chambers in way of triumph; the fire catch'd & fastened upon the thatch of ye house and there burned so furiously as it consumed the whole house & all in lesse then two houres (the people having enough to doe to save themselves). — LORKINS, THOMAS, 1613, *Letter to Sir Thomas Puckering. Harl. MS.* 7,002, *fo.* 268.

January 1. — Went to the Duke's house, the first play I have been at these six months, according to my last vowe, and here saw the so much cried-up play of "Henry the Eighth;" which, though I went with resolution to like it, is so simple a thing made up of a great many patches, that, besides the shows and processions in it, there is nothing in the world good or well done. — PEPYS, SAMUEL, 1663–4, *Diary and Correspondence.*

It was no easy task for an author to compose a dramatic piece which should comprehend several transac-

tions of a monarch recently dead, who had rendered himself so odious to his subjects. To bring upon the stage, before the reigning queen, his daughter, a character so doubtful, at least, as her royal father; to present a strong resemblance of many of his most striking features, without alarming his sovereign, or disgusting the spectators; was an undertaking worthy the genius of Shakspeare; and in which, notwithstanding the apparent difficulty, he has admirably succeeded. — DAVIES, THOMAS, 1784, *Dramatic Micellanies, vol.* I, *p.* 338.

The character of Henry VIII. is drawn with great truth and spirit. It is like a very disagreeable portrait, sketched by the hand of a master. His gross appearance, his blustering demeanour, his vulgarity, his arrogance, his sensuality, his cruelty, his hypocrisy, his want of common decency and common humanity, are marked in strong lines. His traditional peculiarities of expression complete the reality of the picture. The authoritative expletive, "Ha!" with which he intimates his indignation or surprise, has an effect like the first startling sound that breaks from a thunder-cloud. He is of all the monarchs in our history the most disgusting: for he unites in himself all the vices of barbarism and refinement, without their virtues. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 170.

"Henry VIII." has for us a literary interest, on account of its style, which the poet has certainly been careful to bring into conformity with the language of the court, as spoken in his own time, or a few years previously. In no other of his works is the style so elliptical; the habits of conversation seem to introduce into the construction of

its sentences that economy and abbreviation which, in English pronunciation, deprive words of nearly half their syllables. Moreover, we find in it scarcely any play upon words, and, excepting only in a few passages, very little poetry. — GUIZOT, FRANCOIS PIERRE GUILLAUME, 1821–52, *Shakspeare and His Times, p.* 340.

Poetical art perhaps never flattered a monster with such palpable likeness, and yet with such impalpable and cunning mitigation. He suborns his guilty love itself to seduce our sympathy by the beauty of its object. — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1838, *ed. Shakspeare's Plays, Moxon ed., Life.*

QUEEN KATHARINE. In spite of the great virtues which I have to acknowledge in her, I have an insurmountable dislike to this princess. As a married woman she was a pattern of social fidelity. As a queen she was most dignified and majestic. As a Christian she was virtue personified. But she inspired Dr. Samuel Johnson with a voice to sing her highest praise, and of all the women described by Shakespeare she is his special favourite. He mentions her with tender pathos . . . and this is insufferable. Shakespeare did his best to idealise the good woman but this is in vain, when we perceive that this beer-barrel Dr. Johnson is overcome by tender delight at her sight and runs over in her praise. Were she my wife I could make such praise a ground of separation. — HEINE, HEINRICH, 1838–95, *Notes on Shakespeare Heroines, tr. Benecke, p.* 100.

The opening . . . seemed to have the full stamp of Shakspere in his latest manner; the same close-packed

expression; the same life and reality and freshness; the same rapid and abrupt turnings of thought, so quick that language can hardly follow fast enough; the same impatient activity of intellect and fancy, which, having once disclosed an idea, cannot wait to work it orderly out; the same daring confidence in the resources of language which plunges headlong into a sentence without knowing how it is to come forth; the same careless metre which disdains to produce its harmonious effects by the ordinary devices, yet is evidently subject to a master of harmony; the same entire freedom from book-language and commonplace. — SPEDDING, JAMES, 1850, *Who Wrote Shakspere's Henry VIII.? Gentleman's Magazine, August.*

In "Henry VIII." I think I see plainly the cropping out of the original rock on which his own finer stratum was laid. The first play was written by a superior, thoughtful man, with a vicious ear. I can mark his lines, and know well their cadence. See Wolsey's soliloquy, and the following scene with Cromwell, where instead of the metre of Shakspeare, whose secret is that the thought constructs the tune, so that reading for the sense will best bring out the rhythm, — here the lines are constructed on a given tune, and the verse has even a trace of pulpit eloquence. But the play contains through all its length unmistakable traits of Shakspeare's hand, and some passages, as the account of the coronation, are like autographs. What is odd, the compliment to Queen Elizabeth is in the bad rhythm. — EMERSON, RALPH WALDO, 1850–76, *Shakspeare; or, the Poet, Representative Men.*

We admit, then, that this play offers us in some not unimportant passages the single instance of a style not

elsewhere precisely or altogether traceable in Shakespeare; that no exact parallel to it can be found among his other plays; and that if not the partial work it may certainly be taken as the general model of Fletcher in his tragic poetry. On the other hand, we contend that its exceptional quality might perhaps be explicable as a tentative essay in a new line by one who tried so many styles before settling into his latest; and that, without far stronger, clearer, and completer proof than has yet been or can ever be advanced, the question is not solved but merely evaded by the assumption of a double authorship. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 93.

I have no doubt that much of "Henry VIII." also is not Shakespeare. It is largely written by Fletcher, with passages unmistakably by Shakespeare, notably the two first scenes in the first Act, which are sane and compact in thought, expression and simile. — TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD, 1883, *Some Criticisms on Poets, Memoir by his Son, vol.* II, *p.* 291.

If Katharine is a little disappointing, Anne is an unmitigated failure. . . . Turning to the character of Henry VIII. we find a showy figure, who plays his part of king not without effect. Looking deeper, we discover that there is nothing deeper to discover. The Henry of history is a puzzling character, but the Henry of a play should be adequately conceived and intelligibly presented. Whatever disguise he may choose to assume towards the men and women who walk beside him on the boards, to us he must be without disguise. As it is, we know no more than after reading Holinshed whether the Henry of

the play believed or did not believe — or what partial belief he had — in those "scruples," for instance, to which he refers, not without a certain unction. He is illogical, insubstantial, the merely superficial presentment of a deeply interesting historical figure, who would, we may be sure, have had intense interest for Shakespeare, and to whom Shakespeare would have given his keenest thought, his finest workmanship. — SYMONS, ARTHUR, 1887–90, *Henry Irving Shakespeare, vol.* VIII, *pp.* 162, 163.

REJECTED PLAYS.

ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM.

The speeches in "Arden of Feversham" have spirit and feeling; but there is none of that wit, that fertility of analogical imagery, which the worst plays of Shakspeare display. The language is also more plain and perspicuous than we ever find in him, especially on a subject so full of passion. — HALLAM, HENRY, 1842, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, pt.* ii, *ch.* vi, *par.* 33, *note.*

The play, as a whole, is but a slovenly piece of work, and the characters carrying on its action are throughout either repulsive or uninteresting. There seems an intention to suggest in Arden's avarice a kind of poetic justification of his doom; but the hint is too slight to be of much effect. The character of the wife, hateful in itself, is invested with no adventitious charm or allurement; vice is painted as nakedly and blackly as it is by the

chronicler. The personages of the hired ruffians are rather in Ben Jonson's style; but there is little humour to relieve the loathsomeness of the figures. On the other hand, "Arden of Feversham" contains one or two passages which strongly resemble Shakspere in manner. — WARD, ADOLPHUS WILLIAM, 1875–99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature, vol.* II, *p.* 218.

Either this play is the young Shakespeare's first tragic master-piece, or there was a writer unknown to us then alive and at work for the stage who excelled him as a tragic dramatist not less — to say the very least — than he was excelled by Marlowe as a narrative and tragic poet. . . . I cannot but finally take heart to say, even in the absence of all external or traditional testimony, that it seems to me not pardonable merely nor permissible, but simply logical and reasonable, to set down this poem, a young man's work on the face of it, as the possible work of no man's youthful hand but Shakespeare's. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, pp.* 136, 141.

Has no similarities of versification, and does not, in its dealing with the murder of a husband by his wife and her baseborn paramour, suggest Shakespeare's choice of subject, but is closer in some ways than any other play to his handling in character and psychological analysis. — SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature, p.* 329.

Highly as I esteem "Arden of Feversham," I cannot believe that Shakespeare wrote a single line of it. It was not like him to choose such a subject, and still less to

treat it in such a fashion. The play is a domestic tragedy, in which a wife, after repeated attempts, murders her kind and forbearing husband, in order freely to indulge her passion for a worthless paramour. It is a dramatisation of an actual case, the facts of which are closely followed, but at the same time animated with great psychological insight. That Shakespeare had a distaste for such subjects is proved by his consistent avoidance of them, except in this problematical instance; whereas if he had once succeeded so well with such a theme, he would surely have repeated the experiment. The chief point is, however, that only in a few places, in the soliloquies, do we find the peculiar note of Shakespeare's style — that wealth of imagination, that luxuriant lyrism, which plays like sunlight over his speeches. In "Arden of Feversham" the style is a uniform drab. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 204.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE.

"Sir John Oldcastle" is certainly not worthy to be ranked among the works of Shakespear, and it is with great propriety that it has been generally rejected. It has, however, evident marks in places of strong and familiar genius, which might have arisen from his having improved it; but even then they appear to be the shadow of his writing rather than the writing itself. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 77.

"Sir John Oldcastle" is the compound piecework of four minor playwrights, one of them afterwards and

otherwise eminent as a poet — Munday, Drayton, Wilson, and Hathaway: a thin sample of poetic patchery cobbled up and stitched together so as to serve its hour for a season without falling to pieces at the first touch. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, Appendix, p.* 232.

CROMWELL.

"Cromwell" is one of those plays rejected as Shakespear's, and certainly with great reason, for it has upon the whole less of those marks of his genius and judgment than any of those pieces that have been merely attributed to him. That he had some concern in it, however, cannot be doubted. The foot of Hercules can belong only to Hercules. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 90.

"Thomas Lord Cromwell" is a piece of such utterly shapeless, spiritless, bodiless, soulless, senseless, helpless, worthless, rubbish, that there is no known writer of Shakespeare's age to whom it could be ascribed without the infliction of an unwarrantable insult on that writer's memory. — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, Appendix, p.* 232.

YORKSHIRE TRAGEDY.

Is by some attributed to Shakespear; as however all his commentators, except Mr. Steevens, have agreed to

reject it, to avoid unnecessary cavil, we will agree so far with them as to say that it seems to stand in a predicament something between "Pericles," and "Locrine;" for though there are evidently many images which appear to have emanated from the mind of Shakespear, those passages seem rather to have been written for the assistance of another than that the whole belonged to himself. Let the belief, however, rest either way, the merit of it cannot assist any more than the imperfections of it can diminish his reputation. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 335.

For concentrated might and overwhelming weight of realism, this lurid little play beats "A Warning for Fair Women" fairly out of the field. It is and must always be (I had nearly said, thank heaven) unsurpassable for pure potency of horror; and the breathless heat of the action, its raging rate of speed, leaves actually no breathing-time for disgust; it consumes our very sense of repulsion as with fire. But such power as this, though a rare and a great gift, is not the right quality for a dramatist; it is not the fit property of a poet. Ford and Webster, even Tourneur and Marston, who have all been more or less wrongfully though more or less plausibly attacked on the score of excess in horror, have none of them left us anything so nakedly terrible, so terribly naked as this. Passion is here not merely stripped to the skin but stripped to the bones. I cannot tell who could and I cannot guess who would have written it. "'Tis a very excellent piece of work;" may we never exactly look upon its like again! — SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare, p.* 143.

AUTHORSHIP CONTROVERSY.

Editors and commentators upon Shakspeare appear at every turn in all societies. In the club-house we meet three or four of a morning; in the park, see them meditating by the Serpentine, or under a tree in Kensington Gardens; no dinner table is without one or two; in the theatre you view them by dozens. Volume after volume is poured out in note, comment, conjecture, new reading, statement or mis-statement, contradiction, or variation of all kinds. Reviews, magazines, and newspapers, repeat these with so little mercy on the reader, as to give occasional emendations of their own. Some descant upon his sentiments, some upon his extravagancies, some upon his wonderful creations or flights of imagination, some upon his language or phraseology. Several suppose that he wrote more plays than he acknowledged; others, that he fathered more than he had written. While the last opinions are still more original and extraordinary — that his name is akin to a myth, and that he wrote no plays at all! Every new aspirant in this struggle for distinction aims to push his predecessor from his stool. — PRIOR, SIR JAMES, 1780–90, *Life of Edmund Malone, Editor of Shakspeare, p.* 47.

Alas, Shakespeare! Lethe is upon thee! But if it drown thee, it will give up and work the resurrection of better men and more worthy. Thou hast had thy century; they are about having theirs. . . . He was not the mate of the literary characters of his day, and none knew it better than himself. It is a fraud upon the world to thrust his surreptitious fame upon us. He had none that

was worthy of being transmitted. The enquiry will be, who were the able literary men who wrote the dramas imputed to him? The plays themselves, or rather a small portion of them, will live as long as English literature is regarded as worth pursuit. The authorship of the plays is no otherwise material to us, than as a matter of curiosity, and to enable us to render exact justice; but they should not be assigned to Shakespeare alone, if at all. — HART, JOSEPH C., 1848, *The Ancient Lethe.*

Shall this crowning literary product of that great epoch, wherein these new ages have their beginning, vividly arranged in its choicest refinements, flashing everywhere on the surface with its costliest wit, crowded everywhere with its subtlest scholasticisms, betraying, on every page, its broadest, freshest range of experience, its most varied culture, its profoundest insight, its boldest grasp of comprehension — shall this crowning result of so many preceding ages of growth and culture, with its essential, and now palpable connection with the new scientific movement of the time from which it issues, be able to conceal from us, much longer, its history? — Shall we be able to accept in explanation of it, much longer, the story of the Stratford poacher? — BACON, DELIA, 1856, *William Shakespeare and his Plays, Putnam's Magazine, vol. 7, p. 2.*

I am sure that, if those who deny to Shakespeare the credit of writing his own dramas had thought of ascribing them to the judicious Hooker or the pious Bishop Andrews instead of Lord Bacon, they might have made a specious show of proof by carefully culled extracts from his writings. Nay, if Jeremy Taylor, whose prose is so full of poetry, had not been born a generation too late, I

would engage, in the same way, to put a plausible face on the theory that the plays of Shakespeare, except, perhaps, some passages wickedly interpolated, were composed by the eloquent and devout author of "Holy Living and Dead." — BRYANT, WILLIAM CULLEN, 1872, *Shakespeare, Occasional Addresses, vol.* II, *p.* 302.

It is not possible for me to feel the slightest interest in the sort of literary feat which I consider writing upon "Who wrote Shakespeare?" to be. I was very intimate with Harness, Milman, Dyce, Collier — all Shakespearian editors, commentators, and scholars — and this absurd theory about Bacon, which was first broached a good many years ago, never obtained credit for a moment with them; nor did they ever entertain for an instant a doubt that the plays attributed to William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon were really written by him. Now I am intimately acquainted and in frequent communication with William Donne, Edward Fitzgerald, and James Spedding, all thorough Shakespeare scholars, and the latter a man who has just published a work upon Bacon, which has been really the labor of his life; none of these men, competent judges of the matter, ever mention the question of "Who wrote Shakespeare?" except as a ludicrous thing to be laughed at, and I think they may be trusted to decide whether it is or is not so. I have a slight feeling of disgust at the attack made thus on the personality of my greatest mental benefactor; and consider the whole thing a misapplication, not to say waste, of time and ingenuity that might be better employed. As I regard the memory of Shakespeare with love, veneration, and gratitude, and am proud and happy to be his countrywoman, considering it among the privileges of my

English birth, I resent the endeavor to prove that he deserved none of these feelings, but was a mere literary impostor. I wonder the question had any interest for you, for I should not have supposed you imagined Shakespeare had not written his own plays, Irish though you be. Do you remember the servant's joke in the farce of "High Life Below Stairs" where the cook asks, "Who wrote Shakespeare?" and one of the others answers, with, at any rate, partial plausibility, "Oh! why, Colley Cibber, to be sure!" — KEMBLE, FRANCES ANNE, 1874, *Further Records, A Series of Letters, p.* 53.

We may be told, at this stage, that such an extent of search and demonstration as I have devoted to these Baconian points is not necessary to dispose of a bubble which had never floated among the public with any amount of success; and we may be flippantly assured that the inexorable reasoning faculty of Time alone, would, of itself, dispel the fallacy; but such contemptuous treatment is not adequate to the destruction of a theory which has received the support of such minds as that of Lord Palmerston, in England, and such scholars and critics as Judge Holmes and General Butler in America. Bubbles thus patronized must be entirely exploded, or they will be sure to reappear whenever the world has a sick or idle hour, and delusions find their opportunity to strike. Moreover, nothing is lost by our inquiries, after all, beyond a little time; and I doubt not that all true admirers of our poet will agree, that one new ray of light which may thus be thrown upon the character and history of Shakespeare, will justify octavos of discussion. — WILKES, GEORGE, 1877, *Shakespeare from an American Point of View, p.* 457.

The critic has the same interest in the works of Miss Delia Bacon, Mr. W. H. Smith, and Judge Holmes, as the physician has in morbid anatomy. He reads them, not so much for the light which they throw on the question of authorship, as for their interest as examples of wrong-headedness. It is not at all a matter of moment whether Bacon, Raleigh, or another be the favorite on whom the works are fathered, but it is instructive to discover by what plausible process the positive evidences of Shakespeare's authorship (scanty as they are) are put out of court. — INGLEBY, CLEMENT MANSFIELD, 1877, *Shakespeare: The Man and the Book.*

When we ask whether it would have been easier for the author of the philosophy to have composed the drama, or the dramatic poet to have written the philosophy, the answer will depend upon which is the greater of the two. The greater includes the less, but the less cannot include the greater. . . . Great as are the thoughts of the "Novum Organum," they are far inferior to that world of thought which is in the drama. We can easily conceive that Shakespeare, having produced in his prime the wonders and glories of the plays, should in his after leisure have developed the leading ideas of the Baconian philosophy. But it is difficult to imagine that Bacon, while devoting his main strength to politics, to law, to philosophy, should have, as a mere pastime for his leisure, produced in his idle moments the greatest intellectual work ever done on earth. — CLARKE, JAMES FREEMAN, 1881, *Did Shakespeare Write Bacon's Works? North American Review, vol.* 132, *p.* 171.

This work undertakes to demonstrate, not only that William Shakespeare did not, but that Francis Bacon did, write the plays and poems. It presents a critical view of the personal history of the two men, their education, learning, attainments, surroundings, and associates, the contemporaneousness of the writings in question, in prose and verse, an account of the earlier plays and editions, the spurious plays, and "the true original copies." It gives some evidence that Bacon was known to be the author by some of his contemporaries. It shows in what manner William Shakespeare came to have the reputation of being the writer. It exhibits a variety of facts and circumstances, which are strongly suggestive of Bacon as the real author. A comparison of the writings of contemporary authors in prose and verse, proves that no other writer of that age, but Bacon, can come into any competition for the authorship. . . . It is recognized that the evidence drawn from historical facts and biographical circumstances, are not in themselves alone entirely conclusive of the matter, however suggestive or significant as clearing the way for more decisive proofs, or as raising a high degree of probability; and it is conceded, that, in the absence of more direct evidence, the most decisive proof attainable is to be found in a critical and thorough comparison of the writings themselves, and that such a comparison will clearly establish the identity of the author as no other than Francis Bacon. — HOLMES, NATHANIEL, 1884, *The Authorship of Shakespeare, Bibliography of the Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy, ed. Wyman, p.* 28.

Bacon could no more have written the plays than Shakespeare could have prophesied the triumphs of natural philosophy. — CHURCH, RICHARD WILLIAM, 1884-88, *Bacon, p.* 218.

The ingenious critics who insist on merging the existence of Shakespeare in the philosophy of Bacon, are not entirely without excuse for their infatuation. — FRASER, JOHN, 1887, *Chaucer to Longfellow, p.* 311.

As to the actuality of the Cipher there can be but one conclusion. A long, continuous narrative, running through many pages, detailing historical events in a perfectly symmetrical, rhetorical, grammatical manner, and *always growing out of the same numbers, employed in the same way, and counting from the same, or similar, starting-points, cannot be otherwise than a pre-arranged arithmetical cipher.* Let those who would deny this proposition produce a single page of a connected story, eliminated, by an arithmetical rule, from any other work; in fact, let them find five words that will cohere, by accident, in due order, in any publication, where they were not first placed with intent and aforethought. I have never yet been able to find even three such. Regularity does not grow out of chaos. There can be no intellectual order without preëxisting intellectual purpose. The fruits of mind can only be found where mind is or has been. — DONNELLY, IGNATIUS, 1887, *The Great Cryptogram, Introduction, p.* v.

Some attempts have been recently made to extinguish Shakspeare's individuality in Bacon's. Any reader who intimately knows and sincerely loves both authors instinctively feels that the external evidence against Shakspeare's real existence is simply unworthy of critical consideration. Shakspeare's vast mind is in itself a sufficient puzzle for the critic and the metaphysician to explain; to

blend it with Bacon's is to double the difficulties of the problem. Shakspeare and Bacon are both high above the ordinary range of even eminent intellects and souls; but to say that Bacon "wrote Shakspeare" is to introduce hopeless confusion into the philosophy of the human mind. Every critic who has the slightest discernment of spirits must know that the mental processes of Shakspeare and Bacon are fundamentally different, — a difference which goes deep down into vital sources of individual genius. Shakspeare individualizes the results of his knowledge; Bacon generalizes the results of his. The mind of Shakspeare *darts* to conclusions; the mind of Bacon *moves* to them with a gravity worthy of a lord chancellor. Both are men of large reason, large understanding, large imagination, large individuality; but they are different not only in degree, but in kind. It would be impossible for any intelligent critic to reconcile a really characteristic work of Shakspeare with a really characteristic work of Bacon. The mental processes of the two men are radically dissimilar. — WHIPPLE, EDWIN P., 1888, *Outlooks on Society, Literature and Politics*, *p.* 300.

The portrait, after all, that forms the frontispiece to the plays does not look like a perfect fool. It is not a bad nor a mean forehead, is it? If the person it represents did not do something remarkable, one cannot help wondering why not, with that great brain, and that speaking face. What did Ben Jonson mean by those verses of his, saying that this "was for the gentle Shakespeare cut"? Did he mean by gentle, silly? When he spoke of his wit, did he speak ironically? Or did Bacon buy up him too, and get him to write this lie? Joking apart, I think nothing more monstrous was ever conceived than

this theory. It is too foolish even to be entitled to consideration. — STORY, WILLIAM WETMORE, 1890, *Conversations in a Studio, vol.* I, *p.* 173.

It is well known that in recent days a troop of less than half-educated people have put forth the doctrine that Shakespeare lent his name to a body of poetry with which he had really nothing to do — which he could not have understood, much less have written. Literary criticism is an instrument which, like all delicate tools, must be handled carefully, and only by those who have a vocation for it. Here it has fallen into the hands of raw Americans and fanatical women. Feminine criticism on the one hand, with its lack of artistic nerve, and Americanism on the other hand, with its lack of spiritual delicacy, have declared war to the knife against Shakespeare's personality, and have within the last few years found a considerable number of adherents. We have here another proof, if any were needed, that the judgment of the multitude, in questions of art, is a negligible quantity. Before the middle of this century, it had occurred to no human being to doubt that — trifling exceptions apart — the works attributed to Shakespeare were actually written by him. It has been reserved for the last forty years to see an ever-increasing stream of obloquy and contempt directed against what had hitherto been the most honoured name in modern literature. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* I, *p.* 104.

The abundance of the contemporary evidence attesting Shakespeare's reponsibility for the works published under his name gives the Baconian theory no rational right to a hearing; while such authentic examples of Bacon's effort

to write verse as survive prove beyond all possibility of contradiction that, great as he was as a prose-writer and a philosopher, he was incapable of penning any of the poetry assigned to Shakespeare. Defective knowledge and illogical or casuistical argument alone render any other conclusion possible. — LEE, SIDNEY, 1898, *A Life of William Shakespeare, p.* 373, *Appendix.*

It appears that the author of the plays took little care for their preservation, while Bacon took the greatest pains to preserve his acknowledged writings, even when their publication must be postponed; that he was familiar with English poetry, songs and plays, both published and unpublished, some of the latter having no existence, probably, outside of the theatres, while there is nothing to show that Bacon had any knowledge of or taste for such writings, or that he could have had access to the unpublished plays, and in fact it seems probable that he despised them all; that Shakespeare was known and recognized as a poet from poems of conspicuous merit and undoubted authenticity, while Bacon produced no poem worthy of notice, and with a single exception was never spoken of by his contemporaries as a writer of poetry; that the author, moreover, shows an acquaintance with Warwickshire, the home of Shakespeare, and used names and language relating to habits, customs, sports, there prevalent, and to occupations with which Shakespeare was familiar, and also used provincialisms there current, while Bacon is not known ever to have visited that part of England; that he was also steeped in knowledge of rural life, and of the customs and habitual modes of speech of the lower classes, which Bacon would naturally have less acquaintance with; that the plays abound

in anachronisms, historical errors, and obscurities and other peculiarities in the text, which Bacon was less likely than Shakespeare to fall into; and that the author was familiar with, and was full to repletion of allusions to, theatrical matters, and the habits and technical language of actors, which formed the daily life and speech of Shakespeare, while Bacon must have been less conversant if not entirely unacquainted with them. All of these circumstances tend in a greater or less degree to negative the theory of Baconian authorship; and the combined or cumulative force of so many detailed facts, all pointing in the same direction, is certainly a consideration of great weight. — ALLEN, CHARLES, 1900, *Notes on the Bacon-Shakespeare Question*, *p.* 237.

GENERAL.

?And he, the man whom Nature selfe had made
To mock her selfe, and Truth to imitate,
With kindly counter under Mimick shade,
Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late:
With whom all joy and jolly meriment
Is also deaded, and in dolour drent.

— SPENSER, EDMUND, 1591, *The Teares of the Muses*, *Spenser's Works*, *ed. Collier*, *vol.* iv, *p.* 335.

As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras: so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare. Witness his Venus and Adonis; his Lucrece; his sugared Sonnets, among his pri-

vate friends; &c. As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins: so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage. For Comedy: witness his Gentlemen of Verona; his (Comedy of) Errors; his Love's Labour's Lost; his Love's Labour's Won (? All's Well that Ends Well) his Midsummer Night's Dream; and his Merchant of Venice. For tragedy: his Richard II., Richard III., Henry IV., King John, Titus Andronicus, and his Romeo and Juliet. As Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus's tongue, if they would speak Latin: so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrase; if they would speak English. — MERES, FRANCIS, 1598, *Palladis Tamia.*

Honie-tong'd Shekespeare, when I saw thine issue,
I swore Apollo got them and none other,
Their rosie-tainted features cloth'd in tissue,
Some heaven born goddesse said to be their mother:
Rose-cheekt Adonis with his amber tresses,
Faire fire-hot Venus charming him to love her,
Chaste Lucretia virgine-like her dresses,
Proud lust-stung Tarquine seeking still to prove her.
Romea, Richard, more whose names I know not,
Their sugred tongues and power attractive beuty
Say they are Saints, althogh that Sts. they shew not
For thousands vowes to them subjective dutie:
They burn in love, thy children Shakespear het thē,
Go, wo thy Muse, more Nymphish brood beget them.

— WEEVER, JOHN, 1599, *Epigrammes in the Oldest Cut and Newest Fashion.*

Our English Terence. — DAVIES, JOHN, OF HEREFORD, 1611, *The Scourge of Folly, Works, ed. Grosart, p.* 26.

Soule of the Age!
The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!
My *Shakespeare*, rise; I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or *Spenser*, or bid *Beaumont* lye
A little further, to make thee a roome:
Thou art a Moniment, without a tombe,
And art alive still, while thy Booke doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.
That I not mixe thee so, my braine excuses;
I meane with great, but disproportion'd *Muses:*
For, if I thought my judgement were of yeeres,
I should commit thee surely with thy peeres,
And tell, how farre thou didstst our *Lily* outshine,
Or sporting *Kid*, or *Marlowes* mighty line.
And though thou hadst small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*,
From thence to honour thee, I would not seeke
For names; but call forth thund'ring *Æschilus*,
Euripides, and *Sophocles* to us,
Paccuvius, *Accius*, him of *Cordova* dead,
To life againe, to heare thy Buskin tread,
And shake a Stage: Or, when thy Sockes were on,
Leave thee alone, for the comparison
Of all, that insolent *Greece*, or haughtie *Rome* sent forth,
or since did from their ashes come.

. . . . . .

He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the *Muses* still were in their prime,
When like *Apollo* he came forth to warme
Our eares, or like a *Mercury* to charme!
Nature her selfe was proud of his designes,
And joy'd to weare the dressing of his lines!
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.

. . . . . .

Sweet Swan of *Avon!*

. . . . . .

Shine forth, thou Starre of *Poets*, and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage;
Which, since thy flight frō hence, hath mourn'd like night,
And despaires day, but for thy Volumes light.

— JONSON, BEN, 1623, *Shakespeare's Works*, *Preface.*

And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the Stage at *Black-Friers*, or the *Cock-pit*, to arraigne Playes dailie, know, these Playes have had their triall alreadie, and stood out all Appeales; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation. It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth, and overseen his owne writtings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to have collected & publish'd them; and so to have publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diverse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors, that expos'd them: even those, are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived thē. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse, that wee have scarse received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who onely gather his works, and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your divers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit

can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him. And so we leave you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selves, and others. And such Readers we wish him. — HEMINGE, JOHN, AND CONDELL, HENRIE, 1623, *First Folio Edition of Shakespeare's Works, Address to the Reader.*

Those hands, which you so clapt, go now, and ring
You *Britaines* brave; for done are *Shakespeares* dayes:
His dayes are done, that made the dainty Playes,
Which make the Globe of heav'n and earth to ring.
Dry'de is that veine, dry'd is the *Thespian* Spring,
Turn'd all to teares, and *Phœbus* clouds his rayes:
That corp's, that coffin now besticke those bayes,
Which crown'd him *Poet* first, then *Poets* King.

— HOLLAND, HUGH, 1623, *Prefixed to the First Folio Edition of Shakespeare's Works.*

Shakespeare thou hadst as smooth a Comicke vaine,
Fitting the socke, and in thy natural braine,
As strong conception, and as Cleere a rage,
As any one that trafiqu'd with the stage.

— DRAYTON, MICHAEL, 1627, *Of Poets and Poesie.*

I *remember*, the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to *Shakespeare*, that in his writing, (whatsoever he penn'd) hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circum-

stance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted. And to justifie mine owne candor, (for I lov'd the man, and doe honour his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any.) Hee was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature: had an excellent *Phantsie;* brave notions, and gentle expressions: wherein hee flow'd with that facility, that sometime it was necessary he should be stop'd: *Sufflaminandus erat;* as *Augustus* said of *Haterius*. His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had beene so too. Many times hee fell into those things, could not escape laughter: As when hee said in the person of *Cæsar*, one speaking to him; *Cæsar thou dost me wrong*. Hee replyed: *Cæsar did never wrong, but with just cause:* and such like; which were ridiculous. But hee redeemed his vices, with his vertues. There was ever more in him to be praysed, then to be pardoned. — JONSON, BEN, 1630–37, *Timber, or Discoveries.*

What neede my *Shakespeare* for his honour'd bones,
The labour of an Age, in piled stones
Or that his hallow'd Reliques should be hid
Under a starre-ypointing Pyramid?
Dear Sonne of Memory, great Heire of *Fame*,
What needst thou such dull witnesse of thy Name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thy selfe a lasting Monument:
For whil'st to th' shame of slow-endevouring Art
Thy easie numbers flow, and that each part,
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued Booke,
Those Delphicke Lines with deepe Impression tooke
Then thou our fancy of her selfe bereaving,
Dost make us Marble with too much conceiving,
And so Sepulcher'd in such pompe dost lie
That Kings for such a Tombe would wish to die.

— MILTON, JOHN, 1630, *An Epitaph on the admirable Dramaticke Poet, W. Shakespeare.*

In a Conversation between Sir John Suckling, Sir William D'Avenant, Endymion Porter, Mr. Hales of Eaton, and Ben Johnson, Sir John Suckling, who was a profess'd admirer of Shakespear, had undertaken his Defence against Ben Johnson with some warmth; Mr. Hales, who had sat still for some time, hearing Ben frequently reproaching him with the want of Learning, and Ignorance of the Antients, told him at last, "That if Mr. Shakespear had not read the Antients, he had likewise not stollen any thing from 'em; [a fault the other made no Conscience of] and that if he would produce any one Topick finely treated by any of them, he would undertake to shew something upon the same Subject at least as well written by Shakespear." — HALES, JOHN, OF ETON, c 1633, *Some Account of the Life of Mr. William Shakespear, prefixed to the edition of his Works by Nicholas Rowe*, 1709, *vol.* I, *p.* xiv.

Thy Muses sugred dainties seeme to us
Like the fam'd Apples of old *Tantalus:*
For we (admiring) see and heare thy straines,
But none I see or heare, those sweets attaines.

— BANCROFT, THOMAS, 1639, *Two Bookes of Epigrammes, and Epitaphs, No.* 118.

One asked another what Shakespeares workes were worth, all being bound together? hee answered, not a farthing: not worth a farthing, said he, why so? He answered, that his playes were worth a great deale of money, but he never heard that his workes were worth anything at all. — CHAMBERLAIN, ROBERT, 1640, *Jocabella, or a Cabinet of Conceits.*

In speaking of this we entred Loves Library, which was very spacious, and compleatly filled with great variety of Bookes of all faculties, and in all kindes of Volumes. . . . There was also *Shakespeere*, who (as *Cupid* informed me) creepes into the womens closets about bed time, and if it were not for some of the old out-of-date Grandames (who are set over the rest as their tutoresses) the young sparkish Girles would read in *Shakespeere* day and night, so that they would open the Booke or Tome, and the men with a Fescue in their hands should point to the Verse. — JOHNSON, JOHN, 1641, *The Academy of Love, pp.* 96–99.

The Sweetest Swan of Avon, to ye faire
And Cruel Delia, passionatelie Sings:
Other mens weakenesses and follies are
Honour and witt in him; each Accent brings
A Sprig to Crowne him Poet; and Contrive
A Monument, in his owne worke, to live.

— DANIEL, GEORGE, 1647, *Vindication of Poesie, ed. Grosart.*

Shakespeare to thee was dull, whose best jest lyes
I' th Ladies questions, and the Fooles replyes;
Old fashion'd wit, which walkt from town to town
In turn'd Hose, which our fathers call'd the Clown;
Whose wit our nice times would obsceanness call,
And which made Bawdry pass for Comicall:
Nature was all his Art, thy veine was free
As his, but without his scurility.

— CARTWRIGHT, WILLIAM, 1647, *Upon the Dramatick Poems of Mr. John Fletcher.*

I wonder how that person you mention in your letter, could either have the conscience, or confidence to dispraise *Shakespear's* playes, as to say they were made up onely with clowns, fools, watchmen, and the like; but to answer that person, though *Shakespear's* wit will answer for himself, I say, that it seems by his judging, or censuring, he understands not playes, or wit. . . . 'Tis harder, and requires more wit to express a jester, than a grave statesman; yet *Shakespear* did not want wit, to express to the life all sorts of persons, of what quality, profession, degree, breeding, or birth soever; nor did he want wit to express the divers and different humours, or natures, or several passions in mankind; and so well he hath express'd in his playes all sorts of persons, as one would think he had been transformed into every one of those persons he hath described; and as sometimes one would think he was really himself the clown or jester he feigns, so one would think, he was also the king, and privy-councillor; also as one would think he were really the coward he feigns, so one would think he were the most valiant and experienced souldier. — CAVENDISH, MARGARET, 1664, *CCXI Sociable Letters written by the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, Letter CXXIII.*

But *Shakespear's* magic could not copyed be;
Within that circle none durst walk but he.

— DRYDEN, JOHN, 1669, *The Tempest, Prologue.*

His comoedies will remaine witt as long as the English tongue is understood, for that he handles *mores hominum.* Now our present writers reflect so much upon particular persons and coxcombeities, that twenty yeares hence they will not be understood. Though, as Ben: Johnson sayes

of him, that he had but little Latine and lesse Greek, he understood Latine pretty well, for he had been in his younger yeares a schoolmaster in the countrey. — from Mr. . . . Beeston.—AUBREY, JOHN, 1669–96, *Briefe Lives, ed. Clark, vol.* II, *p.* 227.

Shakespeare, who many times has written better than any poet, in any language, is yet so far from writing wit always, or expressing that wit according to the dignity of the subject, that he writes, in many places, below the dullest writers of ours, or any precedent age. Never did any author precipitate himself from such height of thought to so low expressions, as he often does. He is the very Janus of poets; he wears almost everywhere two faces; and you have scarce begun to admire the one, ere you despise the other. . . . Let us therefore admire the beauties and the height of Shakespeare, without falling after him into a carelessness, and, as I may call it, a lethargy of thought, for whole scenes together. — DRYDEN, JOHN, 1672, *An Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age, Works, ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol.* IV, *pp.* 236, 242.

William Shakespeare, the glory of the English stage, whose nativity at Stratford upon Avon, is the highest honour that town can boast of: from an actor of tragedies and comedies, he became a maker; and such a maker, that though some others may perhaps pretend to a more exact decorum and œconomie, especially in tragedy, never any expressed a more lofty and tragic height; never any represented nature more purely to the life, and where the polishments of art are most wanting, as probably his learning was not extraordinary, he pleaseth with a certain wild and native elegance; and in all his writings hath an

unvulgar style, as well in his "Venus and Adonis," his "Rape of Lucrece," and other various poems, as in his dramatics. — PHILLIPS, EDWARD, 1675, *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum, ed. Brydges, p.* 240.

Shakespear was the first that opened this vein upon our stage, which has run so freely and so pleasantly ever since, that I have often wondered to find it appear so little upon any others, being a subject so proper for them; since humour is but a picture of particular life, as comedy is of general. — TEMPLE, SIR WILLIAM, 1680–90, *Of Poetry, Works, vol.* III, *p.* 412.

Our *Shakespear* wrote too in an age as blest,
The happiest poet of his time, and best,
A gracious Prince's favour chear'd his Muse,
A constant Favour he ne'er fear'd to lose.
Therefore he wrote with Fancy unconfin'd,
And Thoughts that were Immortal as his Mind.
And from the Crop of his luxuriant Pen
E'er since succeeding Poets humbly glean.

— OTWAY, THOMAS, 1680, *History and Fall of Caius Marius, Prologue.*

I confess I cou'd never yet get a true account of his Learning, and am apt to think it more than Common Report allows him. I am sure he never touches on a Roman Story, but the Persons, the Passages, the Manners, the Circumstances, the Ceremonies, all are Roman. And what Relishes yet of a more exact Knowledge, you do not only see a Roman in his Heroe, but the particular Genius of the Man, without the least mistake of his Character, given him by their best Historians. You find

his Anthony in all the Defects and Excellencies of his Mind, a Souldier, a Reveller, Amorous, sometimes Rash, sometimes Considerate, with all the various Emotions of his Mind. His Brutus agen has all the Constancy, Gravity, Morality, Generosity, Imaginable, without the least Mixture of private Interest or Irregular Passion. He is true to him, even in the imitation of his Oratory, the famous Speech which he makes him deliver, being exactly agreeable to his manner of expressing himself; of which we have this account, *Facultas ejus erat Militaris & Bellicis accommodata Tumultubus.* But however it far'd with our Author for Book-Learning, 'tis evident that no man was better studied in Men and Things, the most useful Knowledge for a Dramatic Writer. He was a most diligent Spie upon Nature, trac'd her through her darkest Recesses, pictur'd her in her just Proportion and Colours; in which Variety 'tis impossible that all shou'd be equally pleasant, 'tis sufficient that all be proper. — TATE, NAHUM, 1680, *The Loyal General, a Tragedy, Address to Edward Tayler.*

Shackspear whose fruitfull Genius, happy Wit
Was fram'd and finisht at a lucky hit
The Pride of Nature, and the shame of Schools,
Born to Create, and not to Learn from Rules.

— SEDLEY, SIR CHARLES, 1693, *The Wary Widow, by Henry Higden, Prologue.*

Besides some laudable Attempts which have been made with tolerable Success, of late years, towards a just manner of Writing, both in the heroick and familiar Style; we have older Proofs of a right Disposition in our People towards the moral and instructive Way. Our old dra-

matick Poet, Shakespear, may witness for our good Ear and manly Relish. Notwithstanding his natural Rudeness, his unpolish'd Style, his antiquated Phrase and Wit, his want of Method and Coherence, and his Deficiency in almost all the Graces and Ornaments of this kind of Writings; yet by the Justness of his Moral, the Aptness of many of his *Descriptions*, and the plain and natural Turn of several of his *Characters*, he pleases his Audience, and often gains their Ear, without a single Bribe from Luxury or Vice. — SHAFTESBURY, ANTHONY, EARL OF, 1710, *Advice to an Author*, *Characteristics*, *Works*, *vol.* I, *p.* 275.

And yet in Shakespeare something still I find,
That makes me less esteem all human kind;
He made one nature, and another found,
Both in his page with master strokes abound:
His witches, fairies, and enchanted isle,
Bid us no longer at our nurses smile;
Of lost historians we almost complain,
Nor think it the creation of his brain,
Who lives, when his Othello's in a trance?
With his great Talbot too he conquer'd France.

— YOUNG, EDWARD, 1712, *An Epistle to Lord Lansdowne.*

Among the English [who have introduced fairies, witches, &c.] Shakespeare has incomparably excelled all others. That noble extravagance of fancy, which he had in so great perfection, thoroughly qualified him to touch this weak, superstitious part of his reader's imagination; and made him capable of succeeding where he had nothing to support him besides the strength of his own genius.

There is something so wild, and yet so solemn, in the speeches of his ghosts, fairies, witches, and the like imaginary persons, that we cannot forbear thinking them natural, though we have no rule by which to judge of them, and must confess, if there are such beings in the world, it looks highly probable they should talk and act as he has represented them. — ADDISON, JOSEPH, 1712, *Spectator*, *No.* 419, *July* 1.

If ever any author deserved the name of an *original*, it was Shakespear. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of Nature; it proceeded through Egyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or some cast of the models, of those before him. The poetry of Shakespear was inspiration indeed; he is not so much an imitator as an instrument of Nature; and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him. His *characters* are so much Nature herself, that 'tis a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her. Those of other poets have a constant resemblance, which shows that they received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image; each picture, like a mock rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every single character in Shakespear is as much an individual as those in life itself; it is as impossible to find any two alike; and such as from their relation or affinity in any respect appear most to be twins, will upon comparison be found remarkably distinct. To this life and variety of character we must add the wonderful preservation of it, which is such throughout his Plays, that, had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the persons, I believe one

might have applied them with certainty to every speaker. The *power* over our *passions* was never possess'd in a more eminent degree, or displayed in so different instances. Yet all along there is seen no labour, no pains to raise them; no preparation to guide or guess to the effect, or be perceiv'd to lead towards it; but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places. We are surprised at the moment we weep; and yet upon reflection find the passion so just, that we should have been surprised if we had not wept, and wept at that very moment. — POPE, ALEXANDER, 1725, *ed. Shakspear's Plays, Preface, Works, ed. Elwin and Courthope, vol.* X, *p.* 534.

For lofty sense,
Creative fancy, and inspection keen
Through the deep windings of the human heart,
Is not wild Shakespeare thine and Nature's boast?
— THOMSON, JAMES, 1727, *The Seasons, Summer, v.* 1563–6.

Some ladies have shewn a truly public spirit in rescuing the admirable, yet almost forgotten Shakspeare, from being totally sunk in oblivion: — they have contributed to raise a monument to his memory, and frequently honoured his works with their presence on the stage: — an action which deserves the highest encomiums, and will be attended with an adequate reward; since, in preserving the fame of the dead bard, they add a brightness to their own, which will shine to late posterity. — HAYWOOD, ELIZA, 1745, *The Female Spectator, vol.* I, *p.* 259.

There have been some ages in which providence seemed pleased in a most remarkable manner to display it self,

in giving to the world the finest genius's to illuminate a people formerly barbarous. After a long night of Gothic ignorance, after many ages of priestcraft and superstition, learning and genius visited our Island in the days of the renowned Queen Elizabeth. It was then that liberty began to dawn, and the people having shook off the restraints of priestly austerity, presumed to think for themselves. At an Æra so remarkable as this, so famous in his story, it seems no wonder that the nation should be blessed with those immortal ornaments of wit and learning, who all conspired at once to make it famous. — This astonishing genius, seemed to be commissioned from above, to deliver us not only from the ignorance under which we laboured as to poetry, but to carry poetry almost to its perfection. — CIBBER, THEOPHILUS, 1753, *Lives of the Poets, vol.* I, *p.* 123.

Far from the sun and summer gale,
In thy green lap was Nature's darling laid,
What time, where lucid Avon stray'd,
To him the mighty mother did unveil
Her awful face; the dauntless child
Stretch'd forth his little arms and smiled,
"This pencil take" (she said) "whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year;
Thine too these golden keys, immortal Boy!
This can unlock the gates of joy;
Of horror that, and thrilling fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears."

— GRAY, THOMAS, 1755, *The Progress of Poesy.*

Things of the noblest kind his genius drew,
And look'd through Nature at a single view:

A loose he gave to his unbounded soul,
And taught new lands to rise, new seas to roll;
Call'd into being scenes unknown before,
And passing Nature's bounds, was something more.

— CHURCHILL, CHARLES, 1761, *The Rosciad, v.* 264–70.

If Shakspere be considered as a Man, born in a rude age, and educated in the lowest manner, without any instruction, either from the world or from books, he may be regarded as a prodigy; if represented as a poet, capable of furnishing a proper entertainment to a refined or intelligent audience, we must abate much of this eulogy. In his compositions, we regret that many irregularities, and even absurdities, should so frequently disfigure the animated and passionate scenes intermixed with them; and, at the same time, we perhaps admire the more those beauties, on account of their being surrounded with such deformities. A striking peculiarity of sentiment, adapted to a single character, he frequently hits, as it were, by inspiration; but a reasonable propriety of thought he cannot for any time uphold. Nervous and picturesque expressions as well as descriptions abound in him; but it is in vain we look either for purity or simplicity of diction. His total ignorance of all theatrical art and conduct, however material a defect, yet, as it affects the spectator rather than the reader, we can more easily excuse, than that want of taste which often prevails in his productions, and which gives way only by intervals to the irradiations of genius. A great and fertile genius he certainly possessed, and one enriched equally with a tragic and comic vein; but he ought to be cited as a proof, how dangerous it is to rely on these advantages alone for

attaining an excellence in the finer arts. And there may even remain a suspicion that we overrate, if possible, the greatness of his genius; in the same manner as bodies often appear more gigantic, on account of their being disproportioned and misshapen. — HUME, DAVID, 1754–62, *History of England, Reign of James I., Appendix.*

This therefore is the praise of Shakspeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions. . . . The force of his comic scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half, in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable at all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dyes, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre; but the discriminations of true passion are the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance which combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase, nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. Time, which is perpetually

washing away the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes, without *injuring* the adamant of Shakspeare. – JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1768, *ed. Shakspeare's Works, Preface.*

Shakspeare . . . that first genius of the world. . . . I hold a perfect comedy to be the perfection of human composition, and I firmly believe that fifty Iliads and Æneids could be written sooner than such a character as Falstaff's. . . . Shakspeare, who was superior to all mankind, wrote some whole plays that are as bad as any of our present writers. . . . Annibal Caracci himself could not paint like our Raphael poet! . . . Milton and . . . Shakspeare, the only two mortals I am acquainted with who ventured beyond the visible diurnal sphere, and preserved their intellects. . . . Was Raphael himself as great a genius in his art as the author of "Macbeth?" — WALPOLE, HORACE, 1776–90, *Letters, vol.* VI, *pp.* 394, 395, VII, 135, 373, VIII, 160, IX, 254.

The first object which presents itself to us on the English theatre, is the great Shakspeare. Great he may be justly called, as the extent and force of his natural genius, both for tragedy and comedy, are altogether unrivalled. But, at the same time, it is genius shooting wild; deficient in just taste, and altogether unassisted by knowledge or art. Long has he been idolized by the British nation; much has been said, and much has been written concerning him; criticism has been drawn to the very dregs, in commentaries upon his words and witticisms; and yet it remains, to this day, in doubt, whether his beauties, or his faults, be greatest. Admirable scenes, and passages without number, there are in his plays; passages beyond what are to be found in any other dramatic

writer; but there is hardly any one of his plays which can be called altogether a good one, or which can be read with uninterrupted pleasure from beginning to end. Besides extreme irregularities in conduct, and grotesque mixtures of serious and comic in one piece, we are often interrupted by unnatural thoughts, harsh expressions, a certain obscure bombast, and a play upon words which he is fond of pursuing; and these interruptions to our pleasure too frequently occur, on occasions when we would least wish to meet with them. All these faults, however, Shakspeare redeems, by two of the greatest excellencies which any tragic poet can possess; his lively and diversified paintings of character; his strong and natural expressions of passion. These are his two chief virtues; on these his merit rests. — BLAIR, HUGH, 1783, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ed. Mills.*

Shakespear whose writings are the offspring of an intuition that mocks description, that shames the schools, and that ascertains sublimity; whose knowledge of human nature was profound, penetrating, and infallible; whose morality and philosophy confirm all that was good and wise in the ancients; whose words are in our mouths, and their irresistible influence in our hearts; whose eulogium may be felt but cannot be expressed, and whose own pen alone was equal to the composition of his epitaph: this Shakespear in the mouths of his fellow creatures is more known for a few inconsiderable blemishes, sprung from redundant fancy and indispensable conformity, than for innumerable beauties, delightful as truth, and commanding as inspiration. — DIBDIN, CHARLES, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage, vol.* III, *p.* 15.

I proceed now to the mention of Shakespear, a writer whom no ingenuous English reader can recollect without the profoundest esteem and the most unbounded admiration. His gigantic mind enabled him in a great degree to overcome the fetters in which the English language was at that period bound. In him we but rarely trace the languid and tedious formality which at that time characterised English composition. His soul was too impetuous, and his sympathy with human passions too entire, not to instruct him in the shortest road to the heart. But Shakespear for the most part is great only, when great passions are to be expressed. In the calmer and less turbid scenes of life his genius seems in a great degree to forsake him. His wit is generally far fetched, trivial and cold. His tranquil style is perplexed, pedantical, and greatly disfigured with conceits. — GODWIN, WILLIAM, 1797, *Of English Style, The Enquirer, p.* 388.

There are beauties of the first order to be found in Shakspeare, relating to every country and every period of time. His faults are those which belonged to the times in which he lived. . . . If he excelled in exciting pity; what energy appeared in his terror! It was from the crime itself that he drew dismay and fear. It may be said of crimes painted by Shakspeare, as the Bible says of Death, that he is the KING OF TERRORS. . . . One of the greatest faults which Shakspeare can be accused of, is his want of simplicity in the intervals of his sublime passages. When he is not exalted, he is affected; he wanted the art of sustaining himself, that is to say, of being as natural in his scenes of transition, as he was in the grand movements of the soul. — STAËL, MADAME DE, 1800, *The Influence of Literature upon Society, ch.* xiii.

The admirers of the tragic and comic genius of the English poet seem to me to be much deceived when they applaud the *naturalness of his style.* Shakspeare is natural in his sentiments and ideas, never in his expressions, except in those fine scenes where his genius rises to its highest flight; yet in those very scenes his language is often affected; he has all the faults of the Italian writers of his time; he is eminently wanting in simplicity. His descriptions are inflated, distorted; they betray the badly-educated man, who, not knowing the gender, nor the accent, nor the exact meaning of words, introduces poetic expressions at hap-hazard into the most trivial situations. — CHATEAUBRIAND, FRANÇOIS RENÉ, VICOMTE DE, 1801, *Shakspere on Shakspeare.*

The claims of this great poet on the admiration of mankind are innumerable, but rhythmical modulation is not one of them; nor do I think it either wise or just to hold him forth as supereminent in every quality which constitutes genius. Beaumont is as sublime, Fletcher as pathetic, and Jonson as nervous. Nor let it be accounted poor or niggard praise to allow him only an equality with these extraordinary men in their peculiar excellencies, while he is admitted to possess many others, to which they made no approaches. Indeed if I were asked for the discriminating quality of Shakespeare's mind, that by which he is raised above all competition, above all prospect of rivalry, I should say it was WIT. — GIFFORD, WILLIAM, 1805–13, *Plays of Massinger, Introduction.*

In regard to the pathos, Shakespear is greatly inferior to many dramatic poets. In the terrific and sublime he

is unequalled, but he does not possess the power of Otway, and many inferior poets, in exciting pity. He is pre-eminent in "unlocking the gates of horror and thrilling fears," but not so "in opening the sacred source of sympathetic tears." — PYE, HENRY JAMES, 1807, *Comments on the Commentators on Shakespear, p.* xii.

Let princes o'er their subject kingdoms rule,
'Tis Shakespeare's province to command the soul!
To add one leaf, oh, Shakespeare! to thy bays,
How vain the effort, and how mean my lays!
Immortal Shakespeare! o'er thy hallow'd page,
Age becomes taught, and youth is e'en made sage.

— BONAPARTE, PRINCE LUCIEN, 1810, *Written in the Visitors' Book at Stratford.*

Let any one compare the prodigious variety, and wide-ranging freedom of Shakespeare, with the narrow round of flames, tempests, treasons, victims, and tyrants, that scantily adorn the sententious pomp of the French drama, and he will not fail to recognise the vast superiority of the former, in the excitement of the imagination, and all the diversities of poetical delight. — JEFFREY, FRANCIS, 1811–44, *Ford's Works, Contributions to the Edinburgh Review, vol.* II, *p.* 297.

. . . the magic of that name
Defies the scythe of time, the torch of flame.

— BYRON, LORD, 1812, *Address Spoken at the Opening of Drury Lane Theatre.*

The English stage might be considered equally without rule and without model when Shakspeare arose. The

effect of the genius of an individual upon the taste of a nation is mighty; but that genius, in its turn, is formed according to the opinions prevalent at the period when it comes into existence. Such was the case with Shakspeare. With an education more extensive, and a taste refined by the classical models, it is probable that he also, in admiration of the ancient Drama, might have mistaken the form for the essence, and subscribed to those rules which had produced such masterpieces of art. Fortunately for the full exertion of a genius as comprehensive and versatile as intense and powerful, Shakspeare had no access to any models of which the commanding merit might have controlled and limited his own exertions. He followed the path which a nameless crowd of obscure writers had trodden before him; but he moved in it with the grace and majestic step of a being of a superior order; and vindicated for ever the British theatre from a pedantic restriction to classical rule. Nothing went before Shakspeare which in any respect was fit to fix and stamp the character of a national Drama; and certainly no one will succeed him capable of establishing, by mere authority, a form more restricted than that which Shakspeare used. — Scott, Sir Walter, 1814–23, *Essay on the Drama, Prose Works.*

If intelligence and penetrating depth of observation, as far as they are necessary to the characterizing of life, were the first of poetic qualities, hardly any other poet could enter into competition with him. Others have sought to transport us, for a moment, to an ideal condition of humanity: he presents us with a picture of man, in the depths of his fall and moral disorganization, with all his doings and sufferings, his thoughts and desires,

with a painful minuteness. In this respect he may almost be called a satirist; and well might the complicated enigma of existence, and of man's degradation, as set forth by him, produce a deeper and more lasting impression than is made by a host of splenetic caricaturists, who are called satiric poets. But throughout his works there is a radiant reminiscence of man's pristine dignity and elevation, from which immorality and meanness are an abnormal apostasy: and on every occasion this reminiscence, united to the poet's own nobility of soul and tender feeling, beams forth in patriotic enthusiasm, sublime philanthropy, and glowing love. . . . In the works of Shakspere a whole world is unfolded. Whosoever has comprehended this, and been penetrated with the spirit of his poetry will hardly allow the seeming want of form, or, rather, the form peculiar to his mighty genius, nor even the criticism of those who have misconceived the poet's meaning, to disturb his admiration; as he progresses he will, rather, approve the form as both sufficient and excellent in itself, and in harmonious conformity with the spirit and essence of his art. Shakspere's poetry is, upon the whole, near akin to the German spirit: hence he is appreciated in Germany more than any other foreign poet, and regarded with almost native affection. — SCHLEGEL, FREDERICK, 1815–59, *Lectures on the History of Literature, pp.* 274, 276.

It is the peculiar excellence of Shakespear's heroines, that they seem to exist only in their attachment to others. They are pure abstractions of the affections. We think as little of their persons as they do themselves, because we are let into the secrets of their hearts, which are more important. We are too much interested in their affairs

to stop to look at their faces, except by stealth and at intervals. No one ever hit the true perfection of the female character, the sense of weakness leaning on the strength of its affections for support, so well as Shakespear: no one ever so well painted natural tenderness free from affectation and disguise: no one else ever so well showed how delicacy and timidity, when driven to extremity, grow romantic and extravagant. — HAZLITT, WILLIAM, 1817–69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays, p.* 3.

. . . divinest Shakespere's might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power which he
Imaged 'mid mortality.

— SHELLEY, PERCY BYSSHE, 1818, *Lines written among the Euganean Hills.*

Merciful, wonder-making Heaven! what a man was this Shakspere! Myriad-minded, indeed, he was! — COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere, ed. Ashe, p.* 251.

Regardless of immortalizing his name, he who had penetrated the most hidden stores of Nature; he who had studied man in all his various capacities and failings; he to whom the retrospect of all that had been seemed familiar, and who, as it were, looked into the very soul of time, and read futurity, yet would not see his own greatness beyond mortality, but suffered the hand of ignorance to plant sickly weeds among his ever-blooming flowers, and which the unabated exertions of genius, for more than a century, have not been able totally to destroy. — JACKSON, ZACHARIAH, 1819, *Shakspeare's Genius Justified, Preface, p.* v.

Shakespeare is of no age. He speaks a language which thrills in our blood in spite of the separation of two hundred years. His thoughts, passions, feelings, strains of fancy, all are of this day, as they were of his own — and his genius may be contemporary with the mind of every generation for a thousand years to come. He, above all poets, looked upon men, and lived for mankind. His genius, universal in intellect and sympathy, could find, in no more bounded circumference, its proper sphere. It could not bear exclusion from any part of human existence. Whatever in nature and life was given to man, was given in contemplation and poetry to him also, and over the undimmed mirror of his mind passed all the shades of our mortal world. Look through his plays, and tell what form of existence, what quality of spirit, he is most skilful to delineate? Which of all the manifold beings he has drawn, lives before our thoughts, our eyes, in most unpictured reality? Is it Othello, Shylock, Falstaff, Lear, the Wife of Macbeth, Imogen, Hamlet, Ariel? In none of the other great dramatists do we see any thing like a perfected art. In their works, everything, it is true, exists in some shape or other, which can be required in a drama taking for its interest the absolute interest of human life and nature; but, after all, may not the very best of their works be looked on as sublime masses of chaotic confusion, through which the elements of our moral being appear? It was Shakespeare, the most unlearned of all our writers, who first exhibited on the stage perfect models, perfect images of all human characters, and of all human events. We cannot conceive any skill that could from his great characters remove any defect, or add to their perfect composition. Except in him, we look in vain for the entire ful-

ness, the self-consistency, and self-completeness of perfect art. All the rest of our drama may be regarded rather as a testimony of the state of genius — of the state of mind of the country, full of great poetical disposition, and great tragic capacity and power — than as a collection of the works of an art. Of Shakespeare and Homer alone it may be averred, that we miss in them nothing of the greatness of nature. In all other poets we do; we feel the measure of their power, and the restraint under which it is held; but in Shakespeare and in Homer, all is free and unbounded as in nature; and as we travel along with them, in a car drawn by celestial steeds, our view seems ever interminable as before, and still equally far off the glorious horizon. — WILSON, JOHN, 1819, *A Few Words on Shakespeare, Works, vol.* VII, *p.* 420.

Ever since I have been able to think and feel, I have recognized Shakspere as the first among all poets; the richest and deepest, the most instructive and delightful, the most mysterious and the clearest, and to whom I devoted myself with ever new reverence and love. . . . In Shakspere, poetry, virtue, truth, life, and history is altogether one: he is therefore not only a great poet in the usual sense of the word, but also for every thinking being an instructive author; the best expounder of the scriptural text, "the earth is everywhere the Lord's." — HORN, FRANZ, 1822, *Shakspeere's Schauspiele Erläutert, Prefaces.*

O mighty poet! Thy works are not, as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art, but are also like the phenomena of nature — like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers, like frost and snow, rain

and dew, hail-storm and thunder, which are to be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert, but that, the further we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident! — DEQUINCEY, THOMAS, 1823–60, *On The Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth, Works, ed. Masson, vol.* X, *p.* 393.

"A dramatic talent of any importance," said Goethe, "could not forbear to notice Shakspeare's works, nay, could not forbear to study them. Having studied them, he must be aware that Shakspeare has already exhausted the whole of human nature in all its tendencies, in all its heights and depths, and that, in fact, there remains for him, the aftercomer, nothing more to do. And how could one get courage only to put pen to paper, if one were conscious in an earnest appreciating spirit, that such unfathomable and unattainable excellences were already in existence! It fared better with me fifty years ago in my own dear Germany. I could soon come to an end with all that then existed; it could not long awe me, or occupy my attention. I soon left behind me German literature, and the study of it, and turned my thoughts to life and to production. So on and on I went in my own natural development, and on and on I fashioned the productions of epoch after epoch. And at every step of life and development, my standard of excellence was not much higher than what at such step I was able to attain. But had I been born an Englishman, and had all those numerous masterpieces been brought before me in all their power, at my first dawn of youthful consciousness,

they would have overpowered me, and I should not have known what to do. I could not have gone on with such fresh light-heartedness, but should have had to bethink myself, and look about for a long time, to find some new outlet." — ECKERMANN, JOHN PETER, 1824, *Conversations of Goethe, tr. Oxenford, v.* I, *p.* 114.

While he abandons himself to the impulse of his imagination, his compositions are not only the sweetest and the most sublime, but also the most faultless that the world has ever seen. But as soon as his critical powers come into play, he sinks to the level of Cowley, or rather he does ill what Cowley did well. All that is bad in his works is bad elaborately, and of malice aforethought. The only thing wanting to make them perfect was, that he should never have troubled himself with thinking whether they were good or not. Like the angels in Milton, he sinks "with compulsion and laborious flight." His natural tendency is upwards. That he may soar, it is only necessary that he should not struggle to fall. He resembled the American cacique, who, possessing in unmeasured abundance the metals which in polished societies are esteemed the most precious, was utterly unconscious of their value, and gave up treasures more valuable than the imperial crowns of other countries, to secure some gaudy and far-fetched but worthless bauble, a plated button, or a necklace of coloured glass. — MACAULAY, THOMAS BABINGTON, 1826, *Dryden, Edinburgh Review, Critical and Miscellaneous Essays.*

. . . An immortal man, —
Nature's chief darling, an illustrious mate,
Destined to foil old Death's oblivious plan,

And shine untarnished by the fogs of Fate,
Time's famous rival till the final date!

— HOOD, THOMAS, 1828, *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies, S. cv.*

I rejoice that the name of no one woman is popularly identified with that of Shakspeare. He belongs to us all! — the creator of Desdemona, and Juliet, and Ophelia, and Imogen, and Viola, and Constance, and Cornelia, and Rosalind, and Portia, was not the poet of one woman, but the POET OF WOMANKIND. — JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL, 1829, *The Loves of the Poets, vol.* I, *p.* 248.

O thou divine human creature — greater name than even divine poet or divine philosopher — and yet thou wast all three — a very spring and vernal abundance of all fair and noble things is to be found in thy productions! They are truly a second nature. We walk in them, with whatever society we please; either with men, or fair women, or circling spirits, or with none but the whispering airs and leaves. Thou makest worlds of green trees and gentle natures for us, in thy forests of Arden, and thy courtly retirements of Navarre. Thou bringest us amongst the holiday lasses on the green sward; layest us to sleep among fairies in the bowers of midsummer; wakest us with the song of the lark and the silver-sweet voices of lovers: bringest more music to our ears, both from earth and from the planets; anon settest us upon enchanted islands, where it welcomes us again, from the touching of invisible instruments; and after all, restorest us to our still desired haven, the arms of humanity. Whether grieving us or making us glad, thou makest us kinder and happier. The tears which thou fetchest down, are

like the rains of April, softening the times that come after them. Thy smiles are those of the month of love, the more blessed and universal for the tears. — HUNT, LEIGH, 1833, *The Indicator, ch.* xxxvi.

Great poet, 'twas thy art,
To know thyself, and in thyself to be
Whate'er love, hate, ambition, destiny,
Or the firm fatal purpose of the heart,
Can make of Man. Yet thou wert still the same,
Serene of thought, unhurt by thy own flame.
— COLERIDGE, HARTLEY, 1833, *To Shakespeare.*

The piece which he[1] composed upon what he called "the old English model," lay by him some thirty y ears and was not published till towards the close of his life, He was the only person in those days who ventured to. follow our old dramatists; for the revival of Shakespeare's plays upon the stage produced no visible effect upon contemporary play-wrights. But when Garrick had made the name of Shakespeare popular, a race of Shakespearean commentators arose, who introduced a sort of taste for the books of Shakespeare's age; and as they worked in the rubbish, buried treasures, of which they were not in search, were brought to light, for those who could understand their value. Thus, though in their cumbrous annotations, the last labourer always added more rubbish to the heaps which his predecessors had accumulated, they did good service by directing attention to our earlier literature. The very homage which they paid to Shakespeare tended to impress the multitude with an opinion of the paramount importance of his works, and a belief in

[1] Mason.

excellencies of which they could have no perception. They who had any books for show considered Shakespeare, from this time, as a necessary part of the furniture of their shelves. Even the Jubilee, and its after representation at the theatres, contributed to confirm this useful persuasion. Thousands who had not seen one of his plays, nor read a line of them, heard of Shakespeare, and understood that his name was one of those of which it became Englishmen to be proud. — SOUTHEY, ROBERT, 1835, *Life of Cowper, vol.* I, *p.* 338.

But the high spirit that sleepeth here below,
More than all beautiful and stately things,
Glory to God, the mighty Maker, brings;
To whom alone 'twas given the bounds to know
Of human action, and the secret springs
Whence the deep streams of joy and sorrow flow.
— ALFORD, HENRY, 1837, *Stratford-upon-Avon.*

Shakspere was, and is, beyond all comparison, the greatest Poet that the world has ever seen. He is greatest in general power, and greatest in style, which is a symbol or evidence of power. . . . He was not a mere poet in the vulgar sense of the term. . . . On the contrary, he was a man eminently acute, logical, philosophical. His reasoning faculty was on a par with his imagination, and pervaded all his works as completely. . . . We hold him to have been not one, but legion; and we think that in all the cases where critics have attempted to distinguish him by any one particular excellence of intellect, they have failed. . . . His great merit, as it appears to us, is that he had no peculiar, no prominent merit: his mind

was so well constituted, so justly and admirably balanced, that it had nothing in excess. — PROCTER, BRYAN WALLER, 1838, *ed. Works of Ben Jonson, Preface.*

Even as Jesus Christ impressed this son of Hamonia, so am I impressed by William Shakespeare. I grow desperate when I reflect that after all he is an Englishman, belonging to that most odious nation which God in his anger created. — HEINE, HEINRICH, 1838–95, *Notes on Shakespeare Heroines, tr. Benecke, p. 9.*

Shakspeare's learning, whatever it was, gave him hints as to sources from which classical information was to be drawn. The age abounded in classical translations; it also teemed with public pageants, and Allegory itself might be said to have walked the streets. He may have laughed at the absurdity of many of those pageants, but still they would refresh his fancy. Whether he read assiduously or carelessly, it should be remembered that reading was to him not of the vulgar benefit that it is to ordinary minds. Was there a spark of sense or sensibility in any author, on whose works he glanced, that spark assimilated to his soul, and it belonged to it as rightfully as the light of heaven to the eye of the eagle. — CAMPBELL, THOMAS, 1838, *ed. Shakspeare's Plays, Moxon ed., Life.*

This poet, so often sneered at as a frantic and barbarous writer is, above all, remarkable for a judgment so high, so firm, so uncompromising, that one is almost tempted to impeach his coldness, and to find in this impassible observer something that may be almost called cruel towards the human race. In the historical pieces

of Shakspere, the picturesque, rapid, and vehement genius which has produced them seems to bow before the superior law of a judgment almost ironical in its clear-sightedness. Sensibility to impressions, the ardent force of imagination, the eloquence of passion — these brilliant gifts of nature, which would seem destined to draw a poet beyond all limits, are subordinated in this extraordinary intelligence to a calm and almost deriding sagacity, which pardons nothing and forgets nothing. Thus, the dramas of which we speak are painful as real history. Æschylus exhibits to us Fate hovering over the world; Calderon opens to us heaven and hell as the last words of the enigma of life; Voltaire renders his drama an instrument for asserting his own peculiar doctrines; — but Shakspere seeks *his* Fate in the hearts of men, and when he makes us see them so capricious, so bewildered, so irresolute, he teaches us to contemplate, without surprise the untoward events and sudden changes of fortune. In the purely poetical dramas to which this great poet has given so much verisimilitude, we console ourselves in believing that the evils which he paints are imaginary, and that their truth is but general. But the dramatic chronicles which Shakspere has sketched are altogether real. — CHASLES, PHILARÈTE, 1838, *Dictionnaire de la Conversation et de la Lecture, vol.* XLX.

The protagonist on the great arena of modern poetry, and the glory of the human intellect. . . . After this review of Shakspeare's life, it becomes our duty to take a summary survey of his works, of his intellectual powers, and of his station in literature, — a station which is now irrevocably settled, not so much (which happens in other cases) by a vast overbalance of favourable suffrages, as

by acclamation; not so much by the *voices* of those who admire him up to the verge of idolatry, as by the *acts* of those who everywhere seek for his works among the primal necessities of life, demand them, and crave them as they do their daily bread; not so much by eulogy openly proclaiming itself, as by the silent homage recorded in the endless multiplication of what he has bequeathed us; not so much by his own compatriots, who, with regard to almost every other author, compose the total amount of his *effective* audience, as by the unanimous "All hail!" of intellectual Christendom; finally, not by the hasty partisanship of his own generation, nor by the biassed judgment of an age trained in the same modes of feeling and of thinking with himself, but by the solemn award of generation succeeding to generation, of one age correcting the obliquities or peculiarities of another; by the verdict of two hundred and thirty years, which have now elapsed since the very *latest* of his creations, or of two hundred and forty-seven years if we date from the earliest; a verdict which has been continually revived and reopened, probed, searched, vexed, by criticism in every spirit, from the most genial and intelligent, down to the most malignant and scurrilously hostile which feeble heads and great ignorance could suggest when co-operating with impure hearts and narrow sensibilities; a verdict, in short, sustained and countersigned by a longer series of writers, many of them eminent for wit or learning, than were ever before congregated upon any inquest relating to any author, be he who he might, ancient or modern, Pagan or Christian. — De Quincey, Thomas, 1838–63, *Shakspeare, Works, ed. Masson, vol.* iv, *pp.* 17, 69.

Amid the sights and tales of common things,
Leaf, flower, and bird, and wars, and deaths of kings —
Of shore and sea, and Nature's daily round,
Of life that tills, and tombs that load the ground,
His visions mingle, swell, command, pace by,
And haunt with living presence, heart and eye.
And tones from him by other bosoms caught
Awaken flush and stir of mounting thought;
And the long sigh, and deep, impassioned thrill
Rouse custom's trance, and spur the faltering will.
Above the goodly land, more his than ours,
He sits supreme, enthroned in skyey towers,
And sees the heroic brood of his creation
Teach larger life to his ennobled nation.

— STERLING, JOHN, 1839, *Shakespeare.*

Here, I say, is an English King, whom no time or chance, Parliament or combination of Parliaments, can dethrone! This King Shakespeare, does not he shine, in crowned sovereignty, over us all, as the noblest, gentlest, yet strongest of rallying signs; indestructible; really more valuable in that point of view than any other means or appliance whatsoever? We can fancy him as radiant aloft over all the Nations of Englishmen a thousand years hence. From Paramatta, from New York, wheresoever, under what sort of Parish-Constable soever, English men and women are, they will say to one another: "Yes, this Shakespeare is ours; we produced him, we speak and think by him; we are of one blood and kind with him." — CARLYLE, THOMAS, 1840, *The Hero as Poet, Heroes and Hero-Worship.*

It is hard to speak of Shakespeare; these measures of the statures of common poets fall from our hands when

we seek to measure him: it is harder to praise him. Like the tall plane-tree which Xerxes found standing in the midst of an open country, and honoured inappropriately with his "barbaric pomp," with bracelets and chains and rings suspended on its branches, so has it been with Shakespeare. A thousand critics have commended him with praises as unsuitable as a gold ring to a plane-tree. A thousand hearts have gone out to him, carrying necklaces. — BROWNING, ELIZABETH BARRETT, 1842–63, *The Book of the Poets, p.* 151.

If it be said that Shakspere wrote perfect historical plays on subjects belonging to the preceding centuries, I answer, that they *are* perfect plays just because there is no care about centuries in them, but a life which all men recognise for the human life of all time; and this it is, not because Shakspere sought to give universal truth, but because, painting honestly and completely from the men about him, he painted that human nature which is, indeed, constant enough, — a rogue in the fifteenth century being, *at heart*, what a rogue is in the nineteenth and was in the twelfth; and an honest or knightly man being, in like manner, very similar to other such at any other time. And the work of these great idealists is, therefore, always universal; not because it is *not portrait*, but because it is *complete* portrait down to the heart, which is the same in all ages: and the work of the mean idealists is *not* universal, not because it is portrait, but because it is *half* portrait, — of the outside, the manners and the dress, not of the heart. Thus Tintoret and Shakspere paint, both of them, simply Venetian and English nature as they saw it in their time, down to the root; and it does for *all* time; but as for any care to cast themselves into

the particular ways and tones of thought, or custom, of past time in their historical work, you will find it in neither of them, nor in any other perfectly great man that I know of. — RUSKIN, JOHN, 1843–60, *Modern Painters, pt.* iv, *ch.* vii.

It is a relief to read some true book, wherein all are equally dead, — equally alive. I think the best parts of Shakespeare would only be enhanced by the most thrilling and affecting events. I have found it so. And so much the more, as they are not intended for consolation. — THOREAU, HENRY DAVID, 1843, *Familiar Letters, ed. Sanborn, p.* 50.

There Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world: O eyes sublime
With tears and laughter for all time!

— BROWNING, ELIZABETH BARRETT, 1844, *A Vision of Poets.*

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask — Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at. — Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

— ARNOLD, MATTHEW, 1848, *Shakespeare.*

Our poet's mask was impenetrable. You cannot see the mountain near. It took a century to make it suspected; and not until two centuries had passed, after his death, did any criticism which we think adequate begin to appear. It was not possible to write the history of Shakspeare till now; for he is the father of German literature: it was with the introduction of Shakspeare into German, by Lessing, and the translation of his works by Wieland and Schlegel, that the rapid burst of German literature was most intimately connected. It was not until the nineteenth century, whose speculative genius is a sort of living Hamlet, that the tragedy of Hamlet could find such wondering readers. Now, literature, philosophy and thought, are Shakspearized. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see. Our ears are educated to music by his rhythm. . . . Shakspeare is the only biographer of Shakspeare; and even he can tell nothing, except to the Shakspeare in us, that is, to our most apprehensive and sympathetic hour. . . . He was a full man, who liked to talk; a brain exhaling thoughts and images, which, seeking vent, found the drama next at hand. Had he been less, we should have had to consider how well he filled his place, how good a dramatist he was, — and he is the best in the world. . . . He wrote the airs for all our modern music: he wrote the text of modern life; the text of manners: he drew the man of England and Europe; the father of the man in America; he drew the man, and described the day, and what is done in it: he read the hearts of men and women, their probity, and their second thought and wiles; the wiles of innocence, and the transitions by which virtues and vices slide into their contraries: he could divide the mother's part from the father's part in the face of the

child, or draw the fine demarcations of freedom and of fate: he knew the laws of repression which make the police of nature: and all the sweets and all the terrors of human lot lay in his mind as truly but as softly as the landscape lies on the eye. And the importance of this wisdom of life sinks the form, as of Drama or Epic, out of notice. 'Tis like making a question concerning the paper on which a king's message is written. No recipe can be given for the making of a Shakspeare; but the possibility of the translation of things into song is demonstrated. — EMERSON, RALPH WALDO, 1850–76, *Shakspeare; or, the Poet; Representative Men, Works, Riverside ed., vol.* IV, *pp.* 194, 198, 200, 201, 204.

I have read and studied our great dramatist for nearly half a century; and if I could read and study him for half a century more, I should yet be far from arriving at an accurate knowledge of his works, or an adequate appreciation of his worth. He is an author whom no man can read enough, nor study enough. — COLLIER, JOHN PAYNE, 1853, *Notes and Emendations to the Text of Shakespeare's Plays, Introduction.*

. . . like Shakespeare . . .
To reach the popular heart through open ways;
To speak for all men; to be wise and true,
Bright as the noon-time, clear as morning dew,
And wholesome in the spirit and the form.

— MACKAY, CHARLES, 1855, *Mist.*

. . . wide as Shakespeare's soul, . . .

— DOBELL, SYDNEY, 1855, *Sonnets of the War.*

I doubt whether Shakspeare ever had any thought at all of making his personages speak characteristically. In most instances, I conceive, — probably in all, — he drew characters correctly because he *could not avoid it;* and would never have attained, in that department, such excellence as he has, if he had made any studied efforts for it. And the same, probably, may be said of Homer, and of those other writers who have excelled the most in delineating characters. Shakspeare's peculiar genius consisted chiefly, I conceive, in his forming the same distinct and consistent idea of an imaginary person that an ordinary man forms of a real and well-known individual. We usually conjecture pretty accurately, concerning a very intimate acquaintance, how he would speak or act on any supposed occasion; if any one should report to us his having done or said something quite out of character, we should at once be struck with the inconsistency; and we often represent to ourselves, and describe to others, without any conscious effort, not only the substance of what he would have been likely to say, but even his characteristic phrases and looks. Shakspeare *could* no more have endured an expression from the lips of Macbeth inconsistent with the character originally conceived, than an ordinary man could contribute to his most respectable acquaintance the behaviour of a ruffian, or to a human being the voice of a bird, or to a European the features and hue of a negro. Merely from the vividness of the original conception, characteristic conduct and language spontaneously suggested themselves to the great dramatist's pen. He called his personages into being, and left them, as it were, to speak and act for themselves. . . . Slender, and Shallow, and Aguecheek, as Shakspeare has painted them, though equally fools, resemble

one another no more than Richard, and Macbeth, and Julius Cæsar. — WHATELY, RICHARD, 1856, *Bacon's Essays.*

We have the country justice of the time (Shallow); the small country gentlemen (Ford and Page); the young country gull (Aguecheek); the fool (Touchstone); the town gallant (Mercutio); the court gallant (Benedict); the waiting-woman (Maria); the steward (Malvolio); the serving-man (Peter); the page (Robin); the housekeeper (Mrs. Quickly); the statesman (Polonius); the fop (Osrick); the tinker (Sly); the pedlar (Autolycus); the weaver (Bottom); the merchant (Antonio); the village pedant (Holofernes); the malcontent (Jacques); the usurer (Shylock); the tavern wit (Falstaff); the disbanded soldier (Parolles); the town doctor (Caius); the hedge priest (Sir Oliver); the landlord (of the Garter); the drawer (Francis); besides 'prentices, cooks, musicians, nurses, thieves, carriers, — all of the age in which he lived. He quotes the ballads of his day: "Jephtha and his Daughter;" "The King and the Beggar;" "The Humour of Forty Fancies;" "Fire, fire, Jack boy, ho boy." His domestic scenery is that of his own house: the rushes are strewed, the jacks and jills cleaned, the carpets laid, and the serving-men in new fustian and white stockings, — their blue coats brushed, and their hair sleek combed: he has ivory coffers with Turkey cushions bossed with pearl, arras of purple, and valance of Venice. — THORNBURY, GEORGE WALTER, 1856, *Shakspere's England, vol.* II, *p.* 36.

. . . th' accepted King
Of all earthly minstrelling
Crowned with homely Avon lilies,
As his regal way and will is.
— ARNOLD, SIR EDWIN, 1856, *Alla Mano Della Mia Donna.*

The influence of Shakespeare on the French stage touches at a multitude of points; it appears, not in a simple sketch of the authors who have imitated or translated Shakespeare, not in a dry list of names, but by an accurate analysis of it; that is to say, by a philosophic history of whatsoever has helped to diffuse it, or of whatsoever has been inspired by it; a vast subject, doubtless, since the example of Shakespeare has prompted, whether directly or indirectly, almost all the theories and almost all the works of the modern drama. The analysis, therefore, of the influence of Shakespeare comprises *the history both of the form* and *of the theory of the Drama*, and, up to a certain point, *the history of dramatic criticism* in France during nearly two centuries; two centuries fruitful, indeed, in attempts and results, and the subject opens and spreads the farther we advance. . . The theatre of Shakespeare is the most perfect that the world has yet seen. It will continue to be a study for dramatic authors of all ages, and all will find in it the very nutriment for an artistic education — an education which will be developed unconsciously, so to speak, by the study of all the emotions that can stir the heart, of all the loftiest thoughts that can elevate the soul. The influence of Shakespeare upon the French stage has been profoundly salutary. — LACROIX, ALBERT, 1856, *Historie de l'Influence de Shakespeare sur le Théatre Français*, *p.* 338.

Only Shakespeare wrote comedy and tragedy with truly ideal elevation and breadth. Only Shakespeare had that true sense of humor which, like the universal solvent sought by the alchemists, so fuses together all the elements of a character, (as in Falstaff,) that any question of good or evil, of dignified or ridiculous, is silenced by

the apprehension of its thorough humanity. Rabelais shows gleams of it in Panurge; but, in our opinion, no man ever possessed it in an equal degree with Shakespeare, except Cervantes; no man has since shown anything like an approach to it, (for Molière's quality was comic power rather than humor,) except Sterne, Fielding, and perhaps Richter. Only Shakespeare was endowed with that healthy equilibrium of nature whose point of rest was midway between the imagination and the understanding, — that perfectly unruffled brain which reflected all objects with almost inhuman impartiality, — that outlook whose range was ecliptical, dominating all zones of human thought and action, — that power of veri-similar conception which could take away Richard III. from History, and Ulysses from Homer, — and that creative faculty whose equal touch is alike vivifying in Shallow and in Lear. He alone never seeks in abnormal and monstrous characters to evade the risks and responsibilities of absolute truthfulness, not to stimulate a jaded imagination by Caligulan horrors of plot. — LOWELL, JAMES RUSSELL, 1858-64-90, *Library of Old Authors, Prose Works, Riverside ed., p.* 278.

Shakespeare, indeed, in his transcendently beautiful embodiments of feminine excellence, the most exquisite creations in literature, passed into a region of sentiment and thought, of ideals and of ideas, altogether higher and more supernatural than that region in which he shaped his delicate Ariels and his fairy Titanias. The question has been raised whether sex extends to soul. However this may be decided, here is a soul, with its records in literature, who is at once the manliest of men, and the most womanly of women; who can not only recognize

the feminine element in existing individuals, but discern the idea, the pattern, the radiant genius, of womanhood itself, as it hovers unseen by other eyes, over the living representatives of the sex. Literature boasts many eminent female poets and novelists; but not one has ever approached Shakespeare in the purity, the sweetness, the refinement, the elevation, of his perceptions of feminine character, — much less approached him in the power of embodying these perceptions in persons. These characters are so thoroughly domesticated on the earth, that we are tempted to forget the heaven of invention from which he brought them. The most beautiful of spirits, they are the most tender of daughters, lovers, and wives. They are "airy shapes," but they "syllable men's names." Rosalind, Juliet, Ophelia, Viola, Perdita, Miranda, Desdemona, Hermione, Portia, Isabella, Imogen, Cordelia, — if their names do not call up their natures, the most elaborate analysis of criticism will be of no avail. — WHIPPLE, EDWIN P., 1859–68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p.* 80.

Faith thus dislodged from ancient schools and creeds,
Question to question, doubt to doubt succeeds —
Clouds gathering flame for thunders soon to be,
And glass'd on Shakespeare as upon a sea.
Each guess of others into worlds unknown
Shakespeare revolves, but guards conceal'd his own —
As in the Infinite hangs poised his thought,
Surveying all things, and asserting nought.

— LYTTON, EDWARD, LORD, 1860, *St. Stephen's.*

Of the several works of Shakespere — plays and poems — there were prior to 1616 in circulation, in all, no

fewer than between sixty and sixty-five editions. Some of these reached as many as six editions within a period of not more than twenty-one years. This argues of itself an extensive popularity, especially when we reflect on the small number of the reading public of his day. If we take the lowest estimate of the editions (sixty), and suppose each issue to have consisted of the lowest possible paying number (300 say), we should have in circulation no fewer than 18,000 copies of the productions of the great dramatist in print during his lifetime. — NEIL, SAMUEL, 1861, *Shakespere, A Critical Biography, p.* 59.

He stands, in his relations to English literature, in the same position that the great Greek sculptors stood with respect to ancient art, embodying conceptions of humanity in its various attributes with indescribable skill, and with an exquisite agreement to nature. — DRAPER, JOHN WILLIAM, 1861–76, *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe, vol.* II, *p.* 249.

Nor even in his plays is Shakspeare merely a dramatist. Apart altogether from his dramatic power he is the greatest poet that ever lived. His sympathy is the most universal, his imagination the most plastic, his diction the most expressive, ever given to any writer. His poetry has in itself the power and varied excellences of all other poetry. While in grandeur, and beauty, and passion, and sweetest music, and all the other higher gifts of song he may be ranked with the greatest, — with Spenser, and Chaucer, and Milton, and Dante, and Homer, — he is at the same time more nervous than Dryden, and more sententious than Pope, and more sparkling and of more abounding conceit, when he

chooses, than Donne, or Cowley, or Butler. In whose handling was language ever such a flame of fire as it is in his? His wonderful potency in the use of this instrument would alone set him above all other writers. — CRAIK, GEORGE L., 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language, vol.* 1, *p.* 591.

Although the dialect of Shakespeare does not exhibit the same relative superiority as that of Chaucer over all older and contemporaneous literature, its absolute superiority is, nevertheless, unquestionable. I have before had occasion to remark that the greatest authors very often confine themselves to a restricted vocabulary, and that the power of their diction lies, not in the multitude of words, but in skilful combination and adaptation of a few. This is strikingly verified by an examination of the stock of words employed by Shakespeare. He introduces, indeed, terms borrowed from every art and every science, from all theoretical knowledge and all human experience; but his entire vocabulary little exceeds fifteen thousand words, and of these a large number, chiefly of Latin origin, occur but once or at most twice in his pages. The affluence of his speech arises from variety of combination, not from numerical abundance. And yet the authorized vocabulary of Shakespeare's time probably embraced twice or thrice the number of words which he found necessary for his purposes; for though there were at that time no dictionaries which exhibit a great stock of words, yet in perusing Hooker, the old translators, and the early voyagers and travellers, we find a verbal wealth, a copiousness of diction, which forms a singular contrast with the philological economy of the great dramatist. In

his theory of dramatic construction, Shakespeare owes little — in his conception of character, nothing — to earlier or contemporary artists; but in his diction, everything except felicity of selection and combination. The existence of the whole copious English vocabulary was necessary, in order that his marvellous gift of selection might have room for its exercise. — MARSH, GEORGE P., 1862, *Origin and History of the English Language, etc.*, *p.* 569.

In Shakespeare we admire the mighty power with which, after a brief introduction, he throws excitement in the way of his heroes and impels them swiftly in rapid upward stages to a momentous height. His method of leading the action and the characters beyond the climax, in the first half of the play, may also serve as a model to us. And in the second half, the catastrophe itself is planned with the sureness and scope of genius, with no attempt at overwhelming effect, without apparent effort, with concise execution, a consequence of the play, following as a matter of course. But the great poet does not always have success with the forces of the falling action, between climax and catastrophe, the part which fills about the fourth act of our plays. In this important place, he seems too much restrained by the customs of his stage. In many of the greatest dramas of his artistic time, the action is divided up, in this part, into several little scenes, which have an episodical character and are inserted only to make the connection clear. The inner conditions of the hero are concealed, the heightening of effects and the concentration so necessary here fails. It is so in "Hamlet," in "King Lear," in "Macbeth," somewhat so in "Antony and Cleopatra." Even in "Ju-

lius Cæsar," the return action contains, indeed, that splendid quarrel scene and the reconciliation between Brutus and Cassius, and the appearance of the ghost; but what follows is again much divided, fragmentary. In "Richard III.," the falling action is indeed drawn together into several great impulses; but yet these do not in a sufficient degree correspond in stage effect to the immense power of the first part. — FREYTAG, GUSTAV, 1863–94, *Technique of the Drama, tr. MacEwan, p.* 185.

We are more intimate with Shakespeare's men and women than we are with our contemporaries, and they are, on the whole, better company. They are more beautiful in form and feature, and they express themselves in a way that the most gifted strive after in vain. What if Shakespeare's people could walk out of the play-books and settle down upon some spot of earth and conduct life there! There would be found humanity's whitest wheat, the world's unalloyed gold. The very winds could not visit the place roughly. No king's court could present you such an array. Where else could we find a philosopher like Hamlet? a friend like Antonio? a witty fellow like Mercutio? where else Imogen's piquant face? Portia's gravity and womanly sweetness? Rosalind's true heart and silvery laughter? Cordelia's beauty of holiness? These would form the centre of the court, but the purlieus, how many-coloured! Malvolio would walk mincingly in the sunshine there; Autolycus would filch purses. Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch would be eternal boon companions. And as Falstaff sets out homeward from the tavern, the portly knight leading the revellers like a three-decker a line of frigates, they are encountered by Dogberry, who summons them to

stand and answer to the watch as they are honest men. — SMITH, ALEXANDER, 1863, *Dreamthorp, p.* 283.

Not only is Shakespeare the closest of all reasoners, but the web of his argument is always of a golden tissue. . . . The very sweepings of his genius are virgin gold. — CLARKE, CHARLES COWDEN, 1863, *Shakespeare-Characters, pp.* 23, 119.

Given a shadow, Shakspere had the power to place himself so, that that shadow became his own — was the correct representation as shadow, of his form coming between it and the sunlight. And this is the highest dramatic gift that a man can possess. But we feel at the same time, that this is, in the main, not so much art as inspiration. — MACDONALD, GEORGE, 1863, *The Imagination and Other Essays, p.* 161.

This player was a prophet from on high,
Thine own elected. Statesman, poet, sage,
For him thy sovereign pleasure passed them by;
Sidney's fair youth, and Raleigh's ripened age,
Spenser's chaste soul, and his imperial mind
Who taught and shamed mankind.

— HOLMES, OLIVER WENDELL, 1864, *Shakespeare Tercentennial Celebration.*

If I preach about Shakspere, and the method of treatment should be somewhat unusual in your ear, I hope you will remember that this is the very thing which I am set to do. Why, then, I would ask, have we just cause to celebrate with a jubilee the fact that three hundred years ago Shakspere was born; or, in other words,

why do we thank God that such a man has been among us? What is there we have read in his writings to render them an enduring benefit to us, — a possession forever, — such as we feel makes us richer, wiser, and, using it aright, better than we should have been without them? It is this question which we propose to discuss. Those who mould a nation's life should be men acquainted with God's scheme of the universe, cheerfully working in their own appointed sphere the work which has been assigned them, accepting God's world because it is His, with all its strange riddles and perplexities, with all the burdens which it lays upon each one of us: — not fiercely dashing and shaking themselves like imprisoned birds against the bars of their prison house, or moodily nourishing in their own hearts, and in the hearts of others, thoughts of discontent, revolt, and despair. Such a poet, I am bold to affirm, we possessed in Shakspere. — TRENCH, RICHARD CHENEVIX, 1864, *Sermon, Tercentenary of Shakspere, Stratford-upon-Avon, April* 23.

In order to deal fairly with this former part of our investigation, it is necessary to remark, in the first instance, that, while the *whole contents* and *general language* of the Bible would be known to our poet from translations previously in use, in regard to particular *words* and *modes of speech*, it is probable that our translators of 1611 owed to Shakspeare as much as, or rather far more than, he owed to them. . . . Take the entire range of English Literature; put together our best authors, who have written upon subjects not professedly religious or theological, and we shall not find, I believe, in them *all united*, so much evidence of the Bible having been read and used, as we have found in Shakspeare *alone*. This is a *phe-*

nomenon which admits of being looked at from several points of view; but I shall be content to regard it solely in connection with the undoubted fact, that of all our authors, Shakspeare is also, by general confession, the greatest and the best. — WORDSWORTH, CHARLES, 1864–80, *Shakspeare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible, pp.* 9, 345.

Homer, Job, Æschylus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Lucretius, Juvenal, St. John, St. Paul, Tacitus, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare. That is the avenue of the immoveable giants of the human mind. The men of genius are a dynasty. Indeed there is no other. They wear all the crowns, even that of thorns. Each of them represents the sum total of absolute that man can realize. We repeat it, to choose between these men, to prefer one to the other, to mark with the finger the first among these first, it cannot be. All are the Mind. Perhaps, in an extreme case — and yet every objection would be legitimate — you might mark out as the highest summit among those summits, Homer, Æschylus, Job, Isaiah, Dante, and Shakespeare. It is understood that we speak here only in an Art point of view, and in Art, in the literary point of view. Two men in this group, Æschylus and Shakespeare, represent specially the drama. . . . His poetry has the sharp perfume of honey made by the vagabond bee without a hive. Here prose, there verse; all forms, being but receptacles for the idea, suit him. This poetry weeps and laughs. The English tongue, a language little formed, now assists, now harms him, but everywhere the deep mind gushes forth translucent. Shakespeare's drama proceeds with a kind of distracted rhythm; it is so vast that it staggers; it has and gives the

vertigo; but nothing is so solid as this excited grandeur. Shakespeare, shuddering, has in himself the winds, the spirits, the philters, the vibrations, the fluctuations of transient breezes, the obscure penetration of effluvia, the great unknown sap. Thence his agitation, in the depth of which is repose. It is agitation in which Goethe is wanting, wrongly praised for his impassiveness, which is inferiority. This agitation, all minds of the first order have it. It is in Job, in Æschylus, in Alighieri. This agitation is humanity. — HUGO, VICTOR, 1864, *William Shakespeare, tr. Baillot, pp.* 66, 185.

He combines in one individual, and harmonizes, qualities apparently incongruous, his genius revealing to him their affinities. — WHITE, RICHARD GRANT, 1865, *ed., The Works of William Shakespeare, an Essay on Shakespeare's Genius, vol.* I, *p.* ccxxxii.

Morning and night meet, as in Nature, in the poet's writings — the comic and the tragic. In the full flush and luxuriance of his powers he rises upon us bright, lively, and jocund as the dawn; we know not where he will lead us in the abundance of his poetical caprice, what stores of mirth and wanton wiles, what brilliant and ever-changing hues will sparkle, dazzle, and allure us in his ambrosial course. But that bright morning — unlike the morning of many of the poet's contemporaries — goes down in a solemn and glorious sunset, canopied with clouds of gold and purple. — BREWER, JOHN SHERREN, 1871–81, *English Studies, ed. Wace, p.* 249.

His was one of those delicate souls which, like a perfect instrument of music, vibrate of themselves at the

slightest touch. . . . He had a sympathetic genius; I mean that naturally he knew how to forget himself and become transfused into all the objects which he conceived. . . . Shakspeare imagines with copiousness and excess; he spreads metaphors profusely over all he writes; every instant abstract ideas are changed into images; it is a series of paintings which is unfolded in his mind. He does not seek them, they come of themselves; they crowd within him, covering his arguments; they dim with their brightness the pure light of logic. He does not labour to explain or prove; picture on picture, image on image, he is forever copying the strange and splendid visions which are engendered one within another, and are heaped up within him. . . . Shakspeare never sees things tranquilly. All the powers of his mind are concentrated in the present image or idea. He is buried and absorbed in it. With such a genius, we are on the brink of an abyss; the eddying water dashes in headlong, devouring whatever objects it meets, bringing them to light again, if at all, transformed and mutilated. We pause stupefied before these convulsive metaphors, which might have been written by a fevered hand in a night's delirium, which gather a pageful of ideas and pictures in half a sentence, which scorch the eyes they would enlighten. . . . The most immoderate of all violators of language, the most marvellous of all creators of souls, the farthest removed from regular logic and classical reason, the one most capable of exciting in us a world of forms, and of placing living beings before us. — TAINE, H. A., 1871, *History of English Literature, tr. Van Laun, vol.* I, *bk.* ii, *ch.* iv, *pp.* 303, 307, 309, 310.

An imagination so creative, a reason so vigorous, a wisdom so clear and comprehensive, taking views of life

and character and duty so broad and just and true, a spirit so fiery and at the same time so gentle, such acuteness of observation and such power of presenting to other minds what is observed — such a combination of qualities seems to afford us, as we contemplate it, a glimpse of what, in certain respects, the immortal part of man shall be, when every cause that dims its vision or weakens its energy or fetters its activity or checks its expansion shall be wholly done away, and that subtler essence shall be left to the full and free exercise of the powers with which God endowed it. — BRYANT, WILLIAM CULLEN, 1872, *Shakspeare, Orations and Addresses, p.* 372.

Here, in his right, he stands!
No breadth of earth-dividing seas can bar
The breeze of morning, or the morning star,
From visiting our lands:
His wit, the breeze, his wisdom, as the star,
Shone where our earliest life was set, and blew
To freshen hope and plan
In brains American, —
To urge, resist, encourage, and subdue!
He came, a household ghost we could not ban:
He sat, on winter nights, by cabin fires;
His summer fairies linked their hands
Along our yellow sands;
He preached within the shadow of our spires;
And when the certain Fate drew nigh, to cleave
The birth-cord, and a separate being leave,
He, in our ranks of patient-hearted men,
Wrought with the boundless forces of his fame,
Victorious, and became
The Master of our thought, the land's first Citizen!

— TAYLOR, BAYARD, 1872, *Shakespeare's Statue, Central Park, New York, May* 23.

There is no room for comparison between him and any other man in Europe, from Chaucer before to Milton after, nor then, again (we hold,) till we reach Sterne and three or four writers of this century. — PALGRAVE, FRANCIS TURNER, 1872, *Thomas Watson The Poet, North American Review, vol* 114, *p.* 89.

A vision as of crowded city streets,
With human life in endless overflow;
Thunder of thoroughfares; trumpets that blow
To battle; clamor, in obscure retreats,
Of sailors landed from their anchored fleets;
Tolling of bells in turrets, and below
Voices of children, and bright flowers that throw
O'er garden-walls their intermingled sweets!
This vision comes to me when I unfold
The volume of the Poet paramount,
Whom all the Muses loved, not one alone; —
Into his hands they put the lyre of gold,
And, crowned with sacred laurel at their fount,
Placed him as Musagetes on their throne.

— LONGFELLOW, HENRY WADSWORTH, 1873, *A Book of Sonnets.*

By common consent his is one of the greatest names in literature. We recognize the following points in his intellectual supremacy: — 1. His profound philosophical insight; his knowledge of human nature enabling him to seize unerringly upon the governing principle or master passion of a man or class of men. 2. — The creativeness of his imagination; exemplified in the multitude of striking characters, embodiments of the laws his intuition has detected. He names more than a thousand, each of whom expresses the thought or sentiment in fitting lan-

guage and conduct. 3. — The skillful grouping of characters, arrangement of scenes, construction and development of plots. 4. — His style; that marvellous copiousness and felicity conjoined, whereby is brought down to our midst the Shakespearian world, as perceived by an eye at once telescopic and microscopic, by an ear keenly sensitive to all harmonies and discords, by a mind at once the most piercing and the most comprehensive, by a heart tenderer than a mother's, yet stouter than that of Leonidas. 5. — His wit and humor. Falstaff is the most comic character in literature; yet he is but one of a multitude. 6. — His power of portraying deep emotion. Others may have equalled him in single instances, but their successes in this particular are few to his. — SPRAGUE, HOMER B., 1874–8, *Masterpieces in English Literature, p.* 107.

To praise Shakespeare is unnecessary, at least in countries of Germanic language. It would be rudeness to suppose any cultivated man or woman to be ignorant of the works of the greatest poet of all times who shows the whole world and mankind as in a glass. . . . The high, lasting, and in some sense unique position Shakespeare occupies in the literature of the world has thus been acknowledged; but it would be wrong and foolish to exalt him above all other great poets; as has been done by some, in Germany especially. Shakespeare is indeed a poet "for all time;" but every great poet is that. We cannot understand why he should have a superior privilege to Homer, Æschylus, Aristophanes, Dante, Cervantes, Molière, Goethe, Byron. Shakespeare was an Englishman of the Elizabethan era, every inch of him, sharing the prejudices and superstitions of his time and of his countrymen. . . . We see that the true criterion

for judging Shakespeare is his own time. Looking upon him in that light we shall be truly just to him. The form of his works, which is undoubtedly faulty at times, belongs to his time and to his country. The spirit of his poetry is and remains the precious possession of mankind, among whose teachers and prophets he will always occupy the front rank. — SCHERR, J., 1874, *A History of English Literature, pp.* 73, 83, 84.

He is not certainly a religionist; he is not a moralist. He neither fashions precepts, nor makes it his business directly or indirectly to enforce them. Is he therefore immoral? Then is nature immoral, human history and the record of daily life; for it is these that Shakespeare reproduces. If he does not so construct his plot, so manipulate his characters, as to give peculiar and brilliant light to moral issues, no more does he pervert and cover them up. He allows the moral forces, among other real natural forces, to flow on with events, to exercise their own share of control over them, and to come out, from time to time, in terrific thunder shocks of retribution. He merely fails, as a showman, to arrest the spectacle, invite attention and rehearse the unmistakable lesson. At bottom, Shakespeare, instead of being an immoral, is a moral writer; because he handles powerfully and truthfully natural, real forces; those which in the world shape character, control its development, gather up its issues. . . . Shakespeare is the poet of natural religion, because he cannot otherwise present nature. — BASCOM, JOHN, 1874, *Philosophy of English Literature, pp.* 124, 129.

The general public were really the first to recognise Shakespeare: no literary potentate bailed him out of ob-

scurity. — MINTO, WILLIAM, 1874–85, *Characteristics of English Poets, p.* 266.

Engrossed though he is with stirring events and thrilling emotions and powerful human characters, it is wonderful how many are the side-glances that he and his characters cast at the Nature that surrounds them. And these glances are like everything else in him, rapid, vivid, and intense. . . . There is hardly one of his plays in which the season and the scene is not flashed upon the mind by a single stroke more vividly than it could be by the most lengthened description. — SHAIRP, JOHN CAMPBELL, 1877, *On Poetic Interpretation of Nature, p.* 174.

Another of the characteristics of Shakspere is his unerring common sense; his feeling of congruity, whether in manners or morals, in taste or in feeling. With all his inexhaustible wealth of imagination, and his daring use of it, he has always the fear of the ridiculous before his eyes, and never gets upon stilts. His imagery may be colossal, it is never disproportioned. . . . Closely connected with Shakespeare's artistic moderation and common sense is his moral uprightness, rectitude of judgment, and soundness of feeling. — SIMPSON, RICHARD, 1878, *The School of Shakspere, vol.* II, *pp.* 396, 397.

Nor is it quite sound and sober criticism to say, of Shakspeare: "He was altogether, from end to end, an artist, and the greatest artist the modern world has known." Or again: "In the unchangeableness of pure art-power Shakspeare stands entirely alone." There is a peculiarity in Mr. Stopford Brooke's use of the words *art, artist.* He means by an artist one whose aim in

writing is not to reveal himself, but to give pleasure; he says most truly that Shakspeare's aim was to please, that Shakspeare "made men and women whose dramatic action on each other and towards a catastrophe was intended to please the public, not to reveal himself." This is indeed the true temper of the artist. But when we call a man emphatically *artist*, a *great artist*, we mean something more than this temper in which he works; we mean by art, not merely an aim to please, but also, and more, a law of pure and flawless workmanship. As living always under the sway of *this* law, and as, therefore, a perfect artist, we do not conceive of Shakspeare. His workmanship is often far from being pure and flawless.

> Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,
> Confronted him with self-comparisons —

There is but one name for such writing as that, if Shakspeare had signed it a thousand times, — it is detestable. And it is too frequent in Shakspeare. . . . We ought not to speak of Shakspere as "altogether, from end to end, an artist;" as "standing entirely alone in the unchangeableness of pure art-power." He is the richest, the most wonderful, the most powerful, the most delightful of poets; he is not altogether, nor even eminently an artist. — ARNOLD, MATTHEW, 1879, *A Guide to English Literature, Mixed Essays, pp.* 193, 194.

The universality and inexhaustible versatility of our own Shakespeare are unique in all literature. But the very richness of his qualities detracts from the symmetry and directness of the dramatic impression. For this reason neither is Lear, nor Othello, nor Macbeth, nor Hamlet (each supreme as an imaginative creation) so typically

perfect a tragedy as the Agamemnon. In each of the four there are slight incidents which we could spare without any evident loss. — HARRISON, FREDERIC, 1879–86, *The Choice of Books and other Literary Pieces*, *p.* 30.

The drama is undoubtedly the most characteristic expression of the Renaissance. . . . Everybody wrote a play, either a tragedy or a comedy: among the writers are many names, which singly were great enough to have thrown lustre over any country — Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford and Massinger, "rare Ben Jonson." But they all pale before Shakespeare: they are so infinitely below him, that they hardly seem to belong to the same race. And yet this brilliant flower sprang into being all at once. There is no hidden growth long enough to account for such a perfect development. Like Provençal poetry in the eleventh, like Dante's poetry in the fourteenth century, it was born full grown. We have seen that Shakespeare drew his plots from the classic ballads and from old stories; but where did he learn to make so many characters, each one of whom would be sufficient for an ordinary writer, — to pierce the motives of every action, — to create living beings? — POOR, LAURA ELIZABETH, 1880, *Sanskrit and its Kindred Literatures; Studies in Comparative Mythology*, *p.* 426.

The Bible apart, Shakespeare's dramas are, by general consent, the greatest classic and literary treasure of the world. His text, with all the admitted imperfections on its head, is nevertheless a venerable and sacred thing, and must nowise be touched but under a strong restraining sense of pious awe. Woe to the man that exercises his critical surgery here without a profound reverence for the

subject! All glib ingenuity, all shifty cleverness, should be sternly warned off from meddling with the matter. — HUDSON, HENRY NORMAN, 1880, *ed. Harvard Shakespeare, vol.* I, *Preface, p.* xxi.

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one
  Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee.
  Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains, yea, the sea,
What power is in them all to praise the sun?
His praise is this, — he can be praised of none.
  Man, woman, child, praise God for him; but he
  Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.
He is; and, being, beholds his work well done.
All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
Are his: without him, day were night on earth.
  Time knows not his from time's own period.
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,
Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.
  All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

— SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, 1882, *William Shakespeare, Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems, p.* 280.

"How weak are words — to carry thoughts like mine!"
Saith each dull daughter round the much bored Nine.
Yet words sufficed for Shakespeare's suit, when he
Woo'd Time, and won instead Eternity.

— WATSON, WILLIAM, 1884, *Epigrams.*

Shakespeare! — To such name's sounding, what succeeds
Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell, —
Act follows word, the speaker knows full well,
Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.
Two names there are: That which the Hebrew reads

With his soul only: if from lips it fell,
Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven and hell,
Would own "Thou didst create us!" Naught impedes
We voice the other name, man's most of might,
Awesomely, lovingly: let awe and love
Mutely await their working, leave to sight
All of the issue as — below — above —
Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
Though dread — this finite from that infinite.

— BROWNING, ROBERT, 1884, *The Names.*

The perfect model of the perfect mind!
Within the spheric fullness of his sense,
Within his kingly soul's circumference,
The image of the universe was shrined;
In lofty utterance, his tongue outlined
The golden orb of all intelligence;
He touched the circle of omnipotence,
Defining things no other ere defined.
God made but one! the rack of centuries,
The rolling chariot of resistless years,
Leaves unbedimmed the amaranth he wears;
His fame is co-eternal with the skies,
His words are fadeless as our memories,
His influence as deathless as our tears.

— MATTHEWS, JAMES NEWTON, 1884, *Shakespeare.*

Dante may over-top Milton, but Shakespeare surpasses both. He is our finest achievement; his plays our noblest possession; the things in the world most worth thinking about. To live daily in his company, to study his works with minute and loving care — in no spirit of pedantry searching for double endings, but in order to discover their secret, and to make the spoken word tell upon the

hearts of man and woman — this might have been expected to produce great intellectual if not moral results. — BIRRELL, AUGUSTINE, 1884, *Obiter Dicta, p.* 146.

Shakspere's pre-eminence consists chiefly in this, that he did supremely well what all were doing. His touch on life was so unerringly true that the most diverse objects took shape and place together naturally in his atmosphere of art; even as in the full rich sunlight of a summer afternoon the many-moving crowds, the river, bridges, buildings, parks, and domes of a great city stand distinct but harmonised. No theatre is so rich in countless and contrasted types of womanhood. Shakspere's women have passed into a proverb. — SYMONDS, JOHN ADDINGTON, 1884, *Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama, p.* 58.

His was the nectar of the gods of Greece,
The lute of Orpheus, and the Golden Fleece
Of grand endeavour; and the thunder-roll
Of words majestic, which, from pole to pole,
Have borne the tidings of our English tongue.
He gave us Hamlet; and he taught us more
Than schools have taught us; and his fairy-lore
Was fraught with science; and he called from death
Verona's Lovers, with the burning breath
Of their great passion that has filled the spheres.
He made us know Cordelia, and the man
Who murder'd sleep, and baleful Caliban;
And, one by one, athwart the gloom appear'd
Maidens and men and myths who were revered
In olden days, before the earth was sad.
Aye! this is true. It was ordainèd so;
He was thine own, three hundred years ago;

But ours to-day; and ours till earth be red
With doom-day splendour for the quick and dead,
And days and nights are scattered like the leaves.
It was for this he lived, for this he died:
To raise to Heaven the face that never lied,
To lean to earth the lips that should become
Fraught with conviction when the mouth was dumb,
And all the firm, fine body turn'd to clay.

— MACKAY, ERIC, 1886, *Love Letters of a Violinist and Other Poems, p.* 107.

The plays in the *Globe* edition contain just a thousand closely-printed pages. I do not think that there are fifty in all, perhaps not twenty — putting scraps and patches together — in which the Shakesperian touch is wanting, and I do not think that that touch appears outside the covers of the volume once in a thousand pages of all the rest of English literature.—SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature, p.* 173.

The rough workmanship in Shakespeare puts me out and often quite repels me, whereas in the great Latin, French, and Italian writers, as in our own Milton, there is usually a high degree of finish in the literary workmanship itself which attracts me, and gives me a profound and unfailing satisfaction.—HAMERTON, PHILIP GILBERT, 1887, *Books Which Have Influenced Me, p.* 63.

Shakespeare has served me best. Few living friends have had upon me an influence so strong for good as Hamlet or Rosalind. The last character, already well beloved in the reading, I had the good fortune to see, I must think, in an impressionable hour, played by Mrs.

Scott Siddons. Nothing has ever more moved, more delighted, more refreshed me; nor has the influence quite passed away. Kent's brief speech over the dying Lear had a great effect upon my mind, and was the burden of my reflections for long, so profoundly, so touchingly generous did it appear in sense, so overpowering in expression. — STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS, 1887, *Books Which Have Influenced Me, p.* 4.

When I was fifteen, Dicks's Shakespeare was published in penny weekly numbers. I had never read any of his plays, and as I have never to this day witnessed the performance of any stage play, I was then in absolute ignorance of what "Shakespeare" meant. The first number contained two plays, "Hamlet" and "Othello," at a halfpenny each. I shall never forget the shock — the bewildering shock — which I received from the last scene in "Hamlet." So invariably had novelists, and even romantic poets like Scott, brought their heroes and heroines happily together before they left the stage, that it was some time before I could realise that in "Hamlet" all was different. The death of Ophelia had startled me; that was irretrievable, no doubt; but Hamlet might still be saved. But when at last death swept the board, and the curtain fell on a universal shambles, I was dazed, angry, and incredulous. I read the play over again, not for the story this time; and then read "Othello." It was one of the turning-points of my life. I was fascinated. Every week, until the series were complete, I devoured the two new plays contained in each number. They enormously widened the horizon of life; they added new and vivid colour to existence, and they intensified my perception of the tragic issues of love and of death that

are bound up in every human heart. But that was not all; Shakespeare was to me the key to all literature. In this way, in my enthusiasm for Shakespeare I greedily devoured criticisms of his plays wherever I found them. — STEAD, W. T., 1887, *Books Which Have Influenced Me, p.* 28.

It remained for Shakspere to combine the idealism with the realism of Love in proper proportions. The colours with which he painted the passion and sentiment of modern Love are as fresh and as true to life as on the day when they were first put on his canvas. Like Dante, however, he was emotionally ahead of his time, as an examination of contemporary literature in England and elsewhere shows. . . . It is in the works of Shakspere that the various motives and emotions which constitute Love — sensuous, æsthetic, intellectual — are for the first time mingled in proper proportions. Shakspere's Love is Modern Love, full-fledged, and therefore calls for no separate analysis. — FINCK, HENRY T., 1887, *Romantic Love and Personal Beauty, vol.* 1, *pp.* 3, 178.

It is said that ten thousand different essays, pamphlets and books have been printed and published concerning the life and writings of William Shakespeare. This is something unparalleled in the history of literature. No other name among men of letters has created such an interest. What an amazing attraction, what a boundless fascination, must people find in the life and character of this man! Men of every nation, of every rank, are captivated by him. . . . People of foreign nations are so much interested in him, that they learn English merely to read his works in the original; and there is hardly a

language capable of literary expression into which these works have not been again and again translated. He is called the father of German literature, and even at the present day is more read and studied in Germany than any native author. His birthplace, now the property of the English nation, has become a Mecca to which pilgrims from the four corners of the world resort; the relation and explanation of the events of his life form one of the great problems of modern times; and societies for the study and elucidation of his writings have been organized in every part of the civilized world. He is the glory of the English-speaking race, and every member of that race, from one end of the world to the other, is more or less indebted to him for what he is, for what culture or enlightenment he possesses, for what largeness of view, superior power of expression, or increased social and intellectual advantages he enjoys; — indeed, I may say that mankind is indebted to him for a richer and more copious speech, a larger social and intellectual life, and a more abundant fund of rational amusement, than it ever possessed before. — WATERS, ROBERT, 1888, *William Shakespeare Portrayed by Himself*, *pp.* 1, 2.

Superb and inimitable as all is, it is mostly an objective and physiological kind of power and beauty the soul finds in Shakspere — a style supremely grand of the sort, but in my opinion stopping short of the grandest sort, at any rate for fulfilling and satisfying modern and scientific and democratic American purposes. Think, not of growths as forests primeval, or Yellowstone geysers, or Colorado ravines, but of costly marble palaces, and palace rooms, and the noblest fixings and furniture, and noble

owners and occupants to correspond — think of carefully built gardens from the beautiful but sophisticated gardening art at its best, with walks and bowers and artificial lakes, and appropriate statue-groups and the finest cultivated roses and lilies and japonicas in plenty — and you have the tally of Shakspere. The low characters, mechanics, even the loyal henchmen — all in themselves nothing — serve as capital foils to the aristocracy. The comedies (exquisite as they certainly are) bringing in admirably portray'd common characters, have the unmistakable hue of plays, portraits, made for the divertisement only of the elite of the castle, and from its point of view. The comedies are altogether non-acceptable to America and Democracy. But to the deepest soul, it seems a shame to pick and choose from the riches Shakspere has left us — to criticise his infinitely royal, multiform quality — to gauge, with optic glasses, the dazzle of his sun-like beams. — WHITMAN, WALT, 1888, *November Boughs, p.* 56.

For my part, I believe that Shakespeare wrote his plays, like the conscientious playwright that he was, to fill the theatre and make money for his fellow-actors and for himself; and I confess to absolute scepticism in reference to the belief that in these dramas Shakespeare's self can be discovered (except on the broadest lines), or that either his outer or his inner life is to any discoverable degree reflected in his plays; it is because Shakespeare is *not* there that the characters are so perfect, — the smallest dash of the author's self would mar to that extent the truth of the character, and make of it a mask. — FURNESS, HORACE HOWARD, 1890, *ed. New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, As You Like It, Introduction, p.* viii.

So large a space did the great dramatist fill in the delightsome journey we were to make together, down through the pleasant country of English letters, that he seemed not so much a personality as some great British stronghold, with outworks, and with pennons flying — standing all athwart the Elizabethan Valley, down which our track was to lead us. From far away back of Chaucer, when the first Romances of King Arthur were told, when glimpses of a King Lear and a Macbeth appeared in old chronicles — this great monument of Elizabethan times loomed high in our front; and go far as we may down the current of English letters, it will not be out of sight, but loom up grandly behind us. And now that we are fairly abreast of it, my fancy still clings to that figure of a great castle — brimful of life — with which the lesser poets of the age contrast like so many out-lying towerss that we can walk all round about, and measure, and scale, and tell of their age, and forces, and style; but this Shakesperean hulk is so vast, so wondrous, so peopled with creatures, who are real, yet unreal — that measure and scale count for nothing. We hear around it the tramp of armies and the blare of trumpets; yet these do not drown the sick voice of poor distraught Ophelia. We see the white banner of France flung to the breeze, and the English columbine nodding in clefts of the wall; we hear the ravens croak from turrets that lift above the chamber of Macbeth, and the howling of the rain-storms that drenched poor Lear; and we see Jessica at her casement, and the Jew Shylock whetting his greedy knife, and the humpbacked Richard raging in battle, and the Prince boy — apart in his dim tower — piteously questioning the jailer Hubert, who has brought "hot-irons" with him. Then there is Falstaff, and Dame

Quickly, and the pretty Juliet sighing herself away from her moonlit balcony. These are all live people to us; we know them; and we know Hamlet, and Brutus, and Mark Antony, and the witty, coquettish Rosalind; even the poor Mariana of the moated grange. — MITCHELL, DONALD G., 1890, *English Lands Letters and Kings, From Elizabeth to Anne, p.* 57.

Herein Chaucer stands at the opposite pole from Shakspeare. The work of the latter abounds in coarse allusions, in filthy conceits, in double meanings. But these passages in the great dramatist's writings are supremely uninteresting. They are as tedious as they are vile. They cannot be called innocent, but they are innocuous, owing to the saving grace of stupidity. When Shakspeare appeals to the lower nature, he does it largely through the agency of verbal quibbles, which are, if possible, more execrable intellectually than they are morally. To trace the allusions contained in them, to unravel the obscurities inwrapped in them, involve a degree of labor which few are willing to bestow, or a previous acquaintance with human nastiness that few have qualified themselves to possess. The result is that these things are constantly passed over unnoticed. There is little attraction in the pursuit of knowledge peculiarly difficult to acquire, and with which, when obtained, the acquirer is more disgusted than pleased. — LOUNSBURY, THOMAS R., 1891, *Studies in Chaucer, vol.* III, *p.* 364.

I seldom refer to Shakespeare in these lectures, since we all instinctively resort to him as to nature itself; his text being not only the chief illustration of each phrase that may arise, but also, like nature, presenting all phases

in combination. It displays more of clear and various beauty, more insight, surer descriptive touches, — above all, more human life, — than that of any other poet; yes, and more art, in spite of a certain constructive disdain, — the free and prodigal art that is like nature's own. Thus he seems to require our whole attention or none, and it is as well to illustrate a special quality by some poet more dependent upon it. Yet if there is one gift which sets Shakespeare at a distance even from those who approach him on one or another side, it is that of his imagination. As he is the chief of poets, we infer that the faculty in which he is supereminent must be the greatest of poetic endowments. Yes: in his wonderland, as elsewhere, imagination is king. There is little doubt concerning the hold of Shakespeare upon future ages. I have sometimes debated whether, in the change of dramatic ideals and of methods in life and thought, he may not become outworn and alien. But the purely creative quality of his imagination renders it likely that its structures will endure. . . . Shakespeare's imagination is still more independent of discovery, place, or time. It is neither early nor late, antiquated nor modern; or, rather, it is always modern and abiding.—STEDMAN, EDMUND CLARENCE, 1892, *The Nature and Elements of Poetry*, *pp.* 229, 230.

Shakespeare is the first among the great English poets since the Old English period in whom the Teutonic spirit again overpoweringly asserts itself, and presses into its service all those elements of foreign culture which were assimilated by the national character. In him we find again that soul-stirring note of deep feeling, that simple boldness of poetic expression, which plunges us, without preparation or mediation, — apparently without any effort

at artistic effect, — into the very heart of the subject; in short, he has that genuineness of sentiment which is a chief characteristic of Germanic poesy. — TEN BRINK, BERNHARD, 1892–95, *Five Lectures on Shakespeare, tr. Franklin, p.* 33.

Shakespeare loved his England and so sounded her praises. The imagination of the poet seized upon the skeleton of the chroniclers and clothed them with flesh and blood. From King John to Henry VIII., from Magna Charta to the Reformation, whether conscious or not of the splendid scope of his achievement, the poet historian has sung an immortal epic of the English nation, having for its dominant note the passing of feudalism and the rise of the common people. The germ of this development has never died out of the souls of that hardy race whose forefathers crept across the gray waste of the German ocean in their frail boats of wood and hide, to grapple with unknown foes upon unknown shores, and to lay the cornerstone of that great and free nation, of whose best life Shakespeare was the poet, chronicler, and seer. — WARNER, BEVERLEY E., 1894, *English History in Shakespeare's Plays, p.* 15.

Probably no dramatist ever needed the stage less, and none ever brought more to it. There have been few joys for me in life comparable to that of seeing the curtain rise on Hamlet, and hearing the guards begin to talk about the ghost; and yet how fully this joy imparts itself without any material embodiment! It is the same in the whole range of his plays: they fill the scene, but if there is no scene they fill the soul. They are neither worse nor better because of the theatre. They are so great that it

cannot hamper them; they are so vital that they enlarge it to their own proportions and endue it with something of their own living force. They make it the size of life, and yet they retire it so wholly that you think no more of it than you think of the physiognomy of one who talks importantly to you. I have heard people say that they would rather not see Shakespeare played than to see him played ill, but I cannot agree with them. He can better afford to be played ill than any other man that ever wrote. Whoever is on the stage it is always Shakespeare who is speaking to me, and perhaps this is the reason why in the past I can trace no discrepancy between reading his plays and seeing them. — HOWELLS, WILLIAM DEAN, 1895, *My Literary Passions, p.* 75.

We cannot lay our hand on anything and say for certain that it was spoken by Shakespeare out of his own personality. He created men and women whose dramatic action on each other, and towards a chosen end, was intended to please the public, not to reveal himself. Frequently failing in fineness of workmanship, having, but far less than the other dramatists, the faults of the art of his time, he was yet in all other points — in creative power, in impassioned conception and execution, in truth to universal human nature, in intellectual power, in intensity of feeling, in the great matter and manner of his poetry, in the welding together of thought, passion, and action, in range, in plenteousness, in the continuance of his romantic feeling — the greatest poet our modern world has known. Like the rest of the greater poets, he reflected the noble things of his time, but refused to reflect the base. — BROOKE, STOPFORD A., 1896, *English Literature, p.* 140.

The first poet who recognised insanity as a disease and painted it as such is Shakespeare, whose fine power of observation far outstripped his age. He who could paint the world in all its truth and reality, who was able to reproduce the most diverse characters, unfalsified and true to Nature, succeeded also in painting in a masterly way mental derangements in all their typical phenomena, just as we observe them to-day, and this at a time at which science was far from a correct recognition of physical disorders. In Shakespeare, the derangements of King Lear, Hamlet, and Lady Macbeth are photographic reproductions of pure objective experience. They fill out certainly the world of the poet who painted all human passions with minute fidelity in his plays, and therefore undertook also to paint according to his observation the human mind under morbid obscuration. In these characters, therefore, we have neither the embodiment of any particular conception of the universe nor an artistic dressing up of any moral or doctrine. — HIRSCH, WILLIAM, 1896, *Genius and Degeneration, p.* 321.

He is an author whom, however we read him, we can hardly read amiss. Yet, just because of this fact, which we may misunderstand as implying that any reading of Shakspere is as good as any other, we are in danger of approaching him in a way to shut up our sympathies and imaginations, and so cut ourselves off from the main avenues of his power. The earnest student, who sees the libraries that have grown up about the works of Shakspere, can hardly escape the inference that the great dramatist is properly an object only of study. Yet never was there conclusion that Shakspere himself would sooner have repudiated. What was the audience for whom

Shakspere wrote his plays? Exclusively an audience that gathered to be amused. Entertainment, not instruction, was Shakspere's aim. Shakspere does teach us in a myriad ways, and may properly be made the object of almost innumerable kinds of study; but the fact remains that, until we have read his plays, or, still better, have seen them acted, with no other purpose than pure enjoyment, we have not yet known Shakspere. — KOOPMAN, HARRY LYMAN, 1896, *The Mastery of Books*, *p.* 24.

In Shakespeare an heroic epoch culminates; he is the commanding peak of a vast group of mountains. It is therefore vain to consider him as though he stood alone, a solitary portent in a plain. More than any other of the greatest poets of the world, he rises, by insensible degrees, on the shoulders and the hands of a crowd of precursors, yet so rapidly did this crowd collect that our eyes are scarcely quick enough to perceive the process. . . . Of those whose inestimable privilege it was to meet Shakespeare day by day, we have no evidence that one perceived the supremacy of his genius. The case is rather curious, for it was not that anything austere or arrogant in himself or his work repelled recognition, or that those who gazed were blinded by excess of light. On the contrary, it seemed to his own friends that they appreciated his aimable, easy talent at its proper value; he was "gentle" Shakespeare to them, and they loved both the man and his poetry. But that he excelled them all at every point, as the oak excels the willow, this, had it been whispered at the Mermaid, would have aroused smiles of derision. . . . For another century the peak of the mountain was shrouded in mists, although its height was vaguely conjectured. Dryden, our earliest modern critic,

gradually perceived Shakespeare's greatness, and proclaimed it in his "Prefaces." Meanwhile, and on until a century after Shakespeare's death, this most glorious of English names had not penetrated across the Channel, and was absolutely unrecognised in France. Voltaire introduced Shakespeare to French readers in 1731, and "Hamlet" was translated by Ducis in 1769. Here at home, in the generations of Pope and Johnson, the magnitude of Shakespeare became gradually apparent to all English critics, and with Garrick his plays once more took the stage. Yet into all the honest admiration of the eighteenth century there entered a prosaic element; the greatness was felt, but vaguely and painfully. At the end of the age of Johnson a generation was born to whom, for the first time, Shakespeare spoke with clear accents. Coleridge and Hazlitt expounded him to a world so ready to accept him, that in regarding the great Revival of 1800 Shakespeare seems almost as completely a factor in it as Wordsworth himself. In the hands of such critics, for the first time, the fog cleared away from the majestic mountain, and showed to the gaze of the world its varied and harmonious splendour. — GOSSE, EDMUND, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature, pp.* 100, 108.

Strictly speaking, there is no literary fame worth envying, save Shakespeare's — and Shakespeare's amounted to this, that Addison wrote "An Account of the Greatest English Poets" in which his name does not appear; and that, of the people one meets in the streets of any city, the majority will not even have heard of him. — HIGGINSON, THOMAS WENTWORTH, 1897, *Favorites of a Day, Book and Heart, p.* 78.

Shakespeare is a well-spring of characters which are saturated with the comic spirit; with more of what we will call blood-life than is to be found anywhere out of Shakespeare; and they are of this world, but they are of the world enlarged to our embrace by imagination, and by great poetic imagination. — MEREDITH, GEORGE, 1897, *An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit, p.* 16.

I have not intended to compare the poetry of Shakespeare with the poetry of the Bible. Shakespeare has neither the eloquence of Isaiah nor the sublimity of Job. What Shakespeare does not profess to do, Job and Isaiah do profess to do — namely, to teach of God and duty. Nor have I intended to compare the merits of the great uninspired poets, or to call one greater and another less. It is better to call each great in his peculiar sphere. But in the creation of character Shakespeare so far surpasses all others, that by common consent we have come to regard him as the greatest secular poet of the world. Will the world ever see a poet who shall surpass him? It can only be by adding Dante's vision of God and Wordsworth's vision of nature to Shakespeare's vision of humanity. Until some inspired bard shall touch all these several strings with simultaneous and equal mastery, we may well content ourselves with Shakespeare. — STRONG, AUGUSTUS HOPKINS, 1897, *The Great Poets and Their Theology, p.* 219.

Shakespeare's spirit is not to be assimilated; this is impossible to a man of our time: one can but dress oneself up in the cast-off garment which served as a covering to his genius. This garment does not suit us, — it is

either too long or too short, or both together. One dresses up as Shakespeare for an hour, and resembles the great man about as much as a lawyer's clerk, masquerading *en mousquetaire*, resembles d'Artagnan, or as the Turk of carnival time resembles the genuine Turk smoking his pipe outside his café in Stamboul. This tremendous model, all whose aspects we cannot see because it goes beyond the orbit of our perspective glass, oppresses and paralyses our intelligence: did one understand it, one would not be much the better off. It would be sheer folly to wish the modern English dramatist not to read his Shakespeare, for it is in Shakespeare that he will find the English character in all its length and breadth; let him absorb and steep himself in Shakespeare by all means: but let him then forget Shakespeare and be of his own time, let him not walk our streets of to-day in the doublet and hose of 1600. The choice has to be made between Shakespeare and life, for in literature, as in morals, it is not possible to serve two masters. It is possible that Shakespeare has been, and is still, the great obstacle to a free development of a national drama. Nor is there anything to be astonished at in this. The Shakespeare whom we know could not have been born when he was had there been another Shakespeare two and a half centuries before. — FILON, AUGUSTIN, 1897, *The English Stage, tr. Whyte, p.* 175.

The first edition of Shakespeare's Plays (folio, 1623) has been rising in price from the commencement of the nineteenth century; but the enormous prices now paid do not date further back than 1864, when a specially fine copy was bought by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts at George Daniel's sale for £716, 2s. This amount was

paid on account of the height of the book and of its great beauty, and possibly the circumstance of the year being the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth had something to do with it, but this sale had the effect of raising the price of all copies permanently. . . . The following is a list of some of the copies which have been sold since the famous Daniel copy: — In 1882 Beresford-Hope's copy, with verses inlaid, title repaired, in morocco by Clarke, fetched £238; and Ouvry's sound copy, in red morocco by Clarke and Bedford, sold for £420. The Earl of Gosford's copy, perfect, with title and verses mounted, and margins of leaves slightly mended, was sold in 1884 for £470. Hartley's copy was in poor condition, although very tall ($13\frac{3}{8}$ by $8\frac{3}{4}$), title with portrait wanting, page with verses mutilated, and some leaves mended. It sold in 1887 for £255. Hartley gave £500 for it to those who had bought it at a knock-out for £75. The Earl of Aylesford's copy, wanting title, with verses from second edition, and five leaves stained, sold in 1888 for £200. In 1889 F. Perkin's copy, with title and verses mounted, sold for £415; and Halliwell Phillipps's poor copy, with portrait, verses, preliminary and last leaf in facsimile, for £95. W. H. Crawford's imperfect copy, with title, verses, prefatory matter, and "Cymbeline" reprinted in facsimile, sold in 1891 for £16, 10s. In this same year Brayton Ives's copy, perfect, but rather short, was sold in New York for 4,200 dollars (£840). — WHEATLEY, HENRY B., 1898, *Prices of Books*, *pp.* 223, 228.

The monarch of mankind! they are proud words those, but they do not altogether over-estimate the truth. He is by no means the only king in the intellectual world, but his power is unlimited by time or space. From the

moment his life's history ceases his far greater history begins. We find its first records in Great Britain, and consequently in North America; then it spread among the German-speaking peoples and the whole Teutonic race, on through the Scandinavian countries to the Finns and the Sclavonic races. We find his influence in France, Spain, and Italy; and now, in the nineteenth century, it may be traced over the whole civilised world. His writings are translated into every tongue and all the languages of the earth do him honour. . . . All the real intellectual life of England since his day has been stamped by his genius, all her creative spirits have imbibed their life's nourishment from his works. Modern German intellectual life is based, through Lessing, upon him. Goethe and Schiller are unimaginable without him. His influence is felt in France through Voltaire, Victor Hugo, and Alfred de Vigny. Ludovic Vitet and Alfred de Musset were from the very first inspired by him. Not only the drama in Russia and Poland felt his influence, but the inmost spiritual life of the Sclavonic story-tellers and brooders is fashioned after the pattern of his imperishable creations. From the moment of the regeneration of poetry in the North he was reverenced by Ewald, Oehlenschläger, Bredahl, and Hauch, and he is not without his influence upon Björnson and Ibsen. — BRANDES, GEORGE, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study, vol.* II, *p.* 411.

No estimate of Shakespeare's genius can be adequate. In knowledge of human character, in wealth of humour, in depth of passion, in fertility of fancy, and in soundness of judgment he has no rival. It is true of him, as of no other writer, that his language and versification adapt

themselves to every phase of sentiment, and sound every note in the scale of felicity. Some defects are to be acknowledged, but they sink into insignificance when measured by the magnitude of his achievement. Sudden transitions, elliptical expressions, mixed metaphors, indefensible verbal quibbles, and fantastic conceits at times create an atmosphere of obscurity. The student is perplexed, too, by obsolete words and by some hopelessly corrupt readings. But when the whole of Shakespeare's vast work is scrutinised with due attention, the glow of his imagination is seen to leave few passages wholly unillumined. — LEE, SIDNEY, 1898, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, *p.* 355.

Shakespeare could be idealistic when he dreamed, as he could be spiritual when he reflected. The spectacle of life did not pass before his eyes as a mere phantasmagoria. He seized upon its principles; he became wise. Nothing can exceed the ripeness of his seasoned judgment, or the occasional breadth, sadness, and terseness of his reflection. The author of "Hamlet" could not be without metaphysical aptitude; "Macbeth" could not have been written without a sort of sibylline inspiration, or the Sonnets without something of the Platonic mind. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that we should have to search through all the works of Shakespeare to find half a dozen passages that have so much as a religious sound, and that even these passages, upon examinations, should prove not to be the expression of any deep religious conception. If Shakespeare had been without metaphysical capacity, or without moral maturity, we could have explained his strange insensibility to religion; but as it is, we must marvel at his indifference and ask

ourselves what can be the causes of it. For, even if we should not regard the absence of religion as an imperfection in his own thought, we must admit it to be an incompleteness in his portrayal of the thought of others. — SANTAYANA, GEORGE, 1900, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion, p.* 153.

As the Spokesman of a race to which has fallen a large share of the government of the modern world, and as the chief exponent in literature of the fundamental conception of life held by the Western world at a time when the thought of the East and the West are being brought into searching comparison, Shakespeare must be studied in the near future with a deeper recognition of the significance of his work and its value as a source of spiritual culture. — MABIE, HAMILTON WRIGHT, 1900, *William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man, Preface, p.* vii.

INDEX.

Addison, Joseph, 202, 291.
Aldrich, Thomas Bailey, 16.
Alford, Henry, 310.
Allen, Charles, 278.
Anonymous, 21, 213.
Arnold, *Sir* Edwin, 320.
Arnold, Matthew, 316, 338.
Arnold, Thomas, 208.
Aubrey, John, 7, 287.

Bacon, Delia, 269.
Bancroft, Thomas, 284.
Barkstead, William, 21.
Barnfield, Richard, 26.
Bascom, John, 336.
Basse, William, 4.
Baynes, T. Spencer, 15.
Benedix, Roderich, 164.
Birrell, Augustine, 342.
Blair, Hugh, 297.
Bodenstedt, Friedrich, 163.
Boerne, L., 157.
Bonaparte, *Prince* Lucien, 300.
Brandes, George, 18, 25, 28, 36, 48, 66, 82, 85, 94, 105, 117, 135, 146, 167, 173, 177, 187, 201, 211, 219, 225, 233, 237, 239, 249, 253, 265, 276, 359.
Brewer, John Sherren, 15, 331.
Brigham, A., *M.D.*, 207.
Brooke, Christopher, 86.
Brooke, Stopford A., 352.
Brown, Charles Armitage, 56, 68, 148.
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 315, 316.
Browning, Robert, 341.
Bryant, William Cullen, 270, 333.
Bucknill, John Charles, *M.D.*, 196, 232.
Bullen, A. H., 47.
Byron, *Lord*, 73, 300.

Campbell, Thomas, 31, 62, 76, 88, 121, 194, 251, 260, 311.
Carlyle, Thomas, 9, 314.
Cartwright, William, 285.
Cary, Henry Francis, 214.
Cavendish, Margaret, 286.
Chamberlain, Robert, 284.
Chasles Philarète, 78, 163, 312.
Chateaubriand, François René, 72, 159, 299.
Chettle, Henry, 3.
Church, Richard William, 273.
Churchill, Charles, 294.
Cibber, Theophilus, 293.
Clarke, Charles Cowden, 58, 63, 103, 124, 128, 145, 246, 328.
Clarke, James Freeman, 272.
Clayden, P. W., 199.
Coleridge, Hartley, 63, 128, 255, 309.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 52, 56, 74, 84, 136, 157, 170, 175, 183, 191, 205, 216, 220, 238, 303.
Collier, John Payne, 318.
Condell, Henrie, 282.
Cope, *Sir* Walter, 50.
Corbet, Richard, 86.
Courdaveaux, V., 163.
Courtenay, Thomas Peregrine, 94, 195, 221.
Craik, George L., 325.

Dall, Caroline Healey, 23.
Daniel, George, 285.
Davies, John, 3, 22, 279.
Davies, Thomas, 83, 101, 120, 259.
Dedication of Venus and Adonis, 20.
Dedication of the Rape of Lucrece, 26.
Dennis, John, 125.
De Quincey, Thomas, 192, 245, 306, 313.
Dibdin, Charles, 43, 67, 72, 83, 135, 169, 180, 203, 226, 238, 265, 266, 267, 297.
Digges, Leonard, 174.
Disraeli, Isaac, 38.
Dobell, Sydney, 318.

Donnelly, Ignatius, 274.
Douce, Francis, 203, 215, 235.
Dowden, Edward, 28, 33, 45, 57, 92, 96, 103, 129, 134, 176, 208, 228.
Drake, Nathan, 55, 61, 87, 236.
Draper, John William, 324.
Drayton, Michael, 26, 282.
Drummond, William, 253.
Dryden, John, 71, 214, 241, 286, 287.
Dyce, Alexander, 31.

Eckermann, John Peter, 192, 216, 307.
Elze, Karl, 162.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 40, 261, 318.
Evans, H. A., 252.
Evelyn, John, 150.

Filon, Augustine, 357.
Finck, Henry T., 345.
Fleay, Frederick Gard, 45, 232.
Fleming, William H., 122.
Fletcher, George, 196.
Fraser, John, 274.
Freeman, Thomas, 27.
Freiligrath, Ferdinand, 159.
French, George Russell, 114.
Frey, Albert R., 117.
Freytag, Gustav, 327.
Fuller, Thomas, 6, 118.
Furness, Horace Howard, 66, 165, 247, 347.
Furnivall, Frederick James, 33, 46, 70, 93, 97, 104, 122, 210, 218, 223, 255.

Gans, Eduard, 158.
Garnett, Richard, 247.
Garrick, David, 8.
Gentleman, Francis, 138.
Gervinus, G. G., 77, 85, 90, 96, 121, 133, 137, 144, 160.
Gesta, Grayorum, 55.
Gifford, William, 299.
Girardin, Saint-Marc, 79.
Godwin, Parke, 37.
Godwin, William, 215, 298.
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, 153.
Gollancz, Israel, 29, 41, 58, 81, 229, 257.
Gosse, Edmund, 134, 355.
Gray, Thomas, 293.
Green, John Richard, 110.
Greene, Robert, 2.
Griffin, W. Hall, 224, 253.
Grimm, Herman, 164.
Grosart, Alexander B., 40.
Guizot, François Pierre Guillaume, 22, 30, 43, 74, 84, 126, 132, 157, 182, 236, 243, 260.

Hales, John, 284.
Hales, John W., 209.
Hallam, Henry, 10, 32, 43, 52, 61, 68, 76, 108, 127, 140, 171, 236, 263.
Halliwell-Phillipps, J. O., 40, 54.
Hamerton, Philip Gilbert, 343.
Hanmer, *Sir* Thomas, 151.
Hare, A. W. *and* J. C., 88.
Harrison, Frederic, 339.
Hart, Joseph C., 269.
Haywood, Eliza, 292.
Hazlitt, William, 27, 51, 60, 67, 87, 107, 113, 120, 126, 135, 139, 143, 147, 156, 190, 205, 215, 227, 230, 243, 250, 259, 303.
Hebler, C., 162.
Heine, Heinrich, 99, 109, 260, 311.
Heminge, John, 282.
Heraud, John A., 13, 63, 141.
Herder, Johann Gottfried, 155.
Heywood, Thomas, 5, 37.
Higginson, Thomas Wentworth, 355.
Hirsch, William, 353.
Holland, Hugh, 282.
Holmes, Nathaniel, 273.
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 328.
Holt, John, 242.
Hood, Thomas, 308.
Horn, Franz, 183, 305.
Howells, William Dean, 80, 123, 352.
Hudson, Henry N., 46, 90, 98, 114, 142, 340.
Hugo, Victor, 12, 161, 186, 246, 331.
Hume, David, 295.
Hunt, Leigh, 309.
Hunter, Joseph, 11, 195.

Inchbald, Elizabeth, 254.
Ingleby, Clement Mansfield, 272.
Inscription on tablet over Shakespeare's grave, 1.
Inscriptions on tablet under Shakespeare's Bust, in the Chancel-north-wall of Stratford Church, 4.
Irving, Washington, 8.

Jackson, Zachariah, 303.
Jameson, Anna Brownell, 76, 98, 102, 137, 140, 148, 158, 183, 194, 206, 220, 227, 244, 251, 254, 308.
Jeffrey, Francis, 300.

Johnson, John, 285.
Johnson, Samuel, 42, 50, 60, 67, 83, 87, 100, 101, 123, 125, 138, 146, 151, 169, 175, 180, 188, 226, 230, 242, 250, 296.
J(onson) B(en), 5.
Jonson, Ben, 42, 240, 281, 283.

Keeling, Captain, 150.
Keightley, Thomas, 70.
Kemble, Frances Anne, 111, 271.
Klein, L., 160.
Knight, Charles, 44, 62, 84, 133, 144, 231, 237.
Koopman, Harry Lyman, 354.
Kreyssig, F., 110, 161, 197, 208.

Lacroix, Albert, 321.
Lamartine, Alphonse Marie Louis de, 79, 198.
Lamb, Charles, 156, 175, 184, 204.
Langbaine, Gerard, 60, 119.
Lee, Sidney, 17, 29, 35, 168, 277, 360.
Leighton, Robert, 13.
Lennox, Charlotte, 202, 254.
Leo, F. A., 200.
Lillo, George, 235.
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 334.
Lorkins, Thomas, 258.
Lounsbury, Thomas R., 349.
Lowell, James Russell, 164, 246, 322.
Lowth, Robert, 180.
Ludwig, Otto, 164.
Lytton, Edward, *Lord*, 323.

Mabie, Hamilton Wright, 19, 24, 66, 178,361.
Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 183, 307.
Macdonald, George, 328.
Mackay, Charles, 318.
Mackay, Eric, 343.
Maginn, William, 77.
Manningham, John, 143.
Marsh, George P., 326.
Martin, *Lady* (Helena Faucit), 81 112, 142.
Massey, Gerald, 45.
Matthews, James Newton, 341.
Meredith, George, 356.
Meres, Francis, 279.
Mézières, Alfred, 79, 197.
Milton John, 59, 283.
Minto, William, 145, 222, 337.
Mitchell, Donald G., 349.
Montagu, Elizabeth, 119.
Montégut, Émile, 255.
Morgan, Appleton, 23.
Morgann, Maurice, 94, 119.
Morley, Henry, 48, 130, 224, 253.

Neil, Samuel, 324.
North, *Sir* Thomas, 225.

Otway, Thomas, 288.

Palgrave, Francis Turner, 32, 334.
Pater, Walter, 54, 172.
Pepys, Samuel, 59, 71, 113, 118, 143, 150, 178, 188, 240, 258.
Phillips, Edward, 288.
Poor, Laura Elizabeth, 339.
Pope, Alexander, 292.
Preface to First Edition of Troilus and Cressida, 212.
Prior, *Sir* James, 268.
Procter, Bryan Waller, 311.
Prologue, Romeo and Juliet, 71.
Pye, Henry James, 106, 300.

Quiller-Couch, A. T., 39.

Rapp, Moritz, 207.
Ravenscroft, Edward, 42.
Richardson, William, 154.
Rolfe, William, J., 34, 40, 47, 239.
Rowe, Nicholas, 7, 105.
Ruggles, Henry J., 219.
Ruskin, John, 316.
Rymer, Thomas, 174, 179.

Saintsbury, George, 24, 35, 131, 142, 173, 237, 249, 264, 343.
Salvini, Tommaso, 167.
Santayana, George, 361.
Scherr, J., 336.
Schlegel, Augustus William, 51, 73, 107, 155, 169, 189, 203.
Schlegel, Frederick, 302.
Scoloker, Anthony, 149.
Scott, *Sir* Walter, 189, 301.
Sedley, *Sir* Charles, 289.
Seymour, E. H., 235.
Shadwell, Thomas, 229.
Shaftesbury, Anthony, *Earl of*, 290.
Shairp, John Campbell, 337.
Sharp, R. Farquharson, 1.
Sharp, William, 34.
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 30, 206, 303.
Sheppard, Samuel, 234.

469177
Inf C
6783-B.
48

Siddons, Sarah, 102, 193.
Simpson, Richard, 91, 337.
Skottowe, Augustine, 52, 108, 147.
Smith, Alexander, 328.
Snider, Denton Jaques, 111, 116, 149, 187, 233, 253.
Southey, Robert, 310.
Southwell, Robert, 21.
Spalding, William, 239.
Spedding, James, 261.
Spenser, Edmund, 278.
Sprague, Homer B., 335.
Stael, *Madame* de, 242, 298.
Stapfer, Paul, 23, 46, 57, 176, 218, 223, 228.
Stead, W. T., 345.
Stedman, Edmund Clarence, 248, 350.
Sterling, John, 314.
Stevens, George, 154.
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 344.
Story, William Wetmore, 276.
Strong, Augustus Hopkins, 356.
Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 22, 29, 38, 54, 64, 70, 80, 93, 115, 130, 138, 142, 166, 172, 210, 228, 251, 256, 262, 264, 266, 266, 267, 340.
Symonds, John Addington, 35, 342.
Symons, Arthur, 256, 263.

Taine, H. A., 13, 121, 141, 164, 332.
Tate, Nahum, 202, 289.
Tatham, J., 234.
Taylor, Bayard, 333.
Taylor, John, 59.
Taylor, Robert, 234.
Temple, *Sir* William, 288.
Ten Brink, Bernhard, 65, 112, 187, 200, 211, 218, 351.
Tennyson, Alfred, *Lord*, 81, 99, 104, 167, 186, 200, 211, 262.
Thomson, James, 292.
Thoreau, Henry David, 316.
Thornbury, George Walter, 320.
Tieck, Johann Ludwig, 75.
T(ofte) R(obert), 49.
Trench, Richard Chenevix, 329.
Tyler, James Endell, 121.

Ulrici, Hermann, 44, 56, 69, 109, 113, 159, 171, 184, 231.

Vaughn, Henry Halford, 100.
Verplanck, Gulian Crommelin, 44, 53, 62, 69, 90, 95, 113, 124, 127, 171, 185, 216, 222, 245.
Voltaire, François Marie Arouet, 152.

Walkley, Thomas, 178.
Walpole, Horace, 106, 296.
Warburton, William, 241.
Ward, Adolphus William, 64, 91, 165, 264.
Ward, *Rev.* John, 5.
Warner, Beverley E., 351.
Waters, Robert, 346.
Watson, William, 340.
Weever, John, 174, 279.
Weiss, John, 64, 165.
Welsh, Alfred H., 199.
Whately, Richard, 320.
Whately, Thomas, 189.
Wheatley, Henry B., 358.
Whipple, Edwin P., 12, 275, 323.
White, Richard Grant, 217, 245, 331.
Whitman, Walt, 347.
Wilkes, George, 271.
Wilson, John, 305.
Winter, William, 65.
Wiseman, Nicholas Patrick Stephen, 162.
Wordsworth, Charles, 330.
Wordsworth, William, 31, 180.
Wotton, *Sir* Henry, 258.
Wyndham, George, 28, 49.

Young, Edward, 290.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Feb. 2009

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